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John 21

John 21:1-3

After these things Jesus revealed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He revealed Himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas (who was called Didymus), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are also coming with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

† The return to fishing symbolized discouragement and uncertainty. Their labor without Christ bore no fruit.

John 21:4-6

But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish to eat, do you?" They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you will find the fish." So they cast it, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great quantity of fish.

† Christ directed their efforts, producing abundance where there had been failure. His presence makes the difference between emptiness and fruitfulness.

† Origen noted that the net full of fish symbolized the church, drawing in multitudes by Christ's word.

John 21:7-8

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits away, dragging the net full of fish.

† John recognized first, but Peter acted first. Both faith and zeal are needed in discipleship.

John 21:9-11

So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already made and fish placed on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." So Simon Peter went up and hauled the net to land, full of large fish, 153; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

† The detail of 153 fish highlights eyewitness testimony. Symbolically, it represented completeness, as Jerome noted it was the number of known nations at the time.

John 21:12-14

Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to inquire of Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. This was now the third time that Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

† The risen Christ provided both fellowship and provision. The meal echoed His feeding miracles and the Last Supper.

John 21:15-17

Now when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." He said to him again, a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was hurt because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

† Jesus restored Peter's three denials with three affirmations of love. True love is expressed in shepherding Christ's people.

† Chrysostom emphasized Peter's restoration as proof that failure does not disqualify a repentant servant.

John 21:18-19

"Truly, truly I say to you, when you were younger, you used to put on your belt and walk wherever you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will

put your hands where you do not want them to go." Now He said this, indicating by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had said this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

† Peter's zeal would one day be fulfilled in martyrdom. Following Christ meant laying down his life.

† Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History 2.25) records Peter's crucifixion in Rome, fulfilling Jesus' words.

John 21:20-22

Peter turned around and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back on His chest at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who is betraying You?" So Peter, upon seeing him, said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"

† Jesus rebuked Peter's curiosity. Discipleship is individual — each must follow Christ regardless of others' paths.

John 21:23

Therefore this account went out among the brothers, that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

† Misinterpretation of Jesus' words led to rumors. Scripture clarifies misunderstandings by recording exactly what He said.

John 21:24-25

This is the disciple who is testifying about these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were written in detail, I expect that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

† John confirmed his eyewitness authorship. The inexhaustible works of Christ exceed written record, pointing to His divine fullness.

How it applies to us today

† Fruitless labor without Christ contrasts with abundance in Him.

† Christ restores the fallen, as He did with Peter, and calls us to love through shepherding.

† Each disciple's path is unique, but all are called to follow Him faithfully.

† His works surpass all human record, but His word gives life sufficient for faith.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Origen – the net of fish as symbol of the church

† Jerome – 153 fish representing the nations

† Chrysostom, Homilies on John – Peter's restoration

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 2.25 – Peter's martyrdom

† Josephus, Antiquities 17.3.3 – tomb and burial context in Jerusalem

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