

John 21—an Epilogue

Having completed his task in writing the Gospel, John moves on to an epilogue whose concern is primarily the roles of Peter and John in the early Christian Community

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” ~ John 20.30-31

“But, last of all, John perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the gospel, being urged by his friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual gospel” ~ Clement of Alexandria ca. 150-215 A.D.

I vv. 1-14 Jesus appears to seven disciples on the shores of Galilee

Of John’s 3 recorded resurrection appearances, this is the only one that mentions Peter.

The “Sons of Zebedee”, James and John, were partners with Simon Peter in the fishing business (Luke 5.10)

Night was the preferred time for fishing so that the catch could be sold fresh first thing in the morning in the marketplace

The “charcoal fire” in v.9 uses the same Greek word as the fire in the presence of Peter’s denial (Jn 18.18, 25)

Jesus eating with the disciples is an affirmation of the incarnation and the reality of the resurrection.

St. Jerome (ca. 400 A.D.) said that the number of fish caught (153) represented every different kind of fish in the sea and symbolized the fact that one day all people and nations would be gathered together by Jesus.¹

In the unbroken net, some see the unbroken unity of the church

¹ William Barclay, *The Gospel of John vol. 2*, revised ed., p. 284

II vv. 15-19 **Jesus restores Peter and indicates how he is to die through his obedience**

As Peter has denied Jesus 3 times, now he is asked to affirm his devotion 3 times.

“Do you love me more than these?” —boat, fish and tackle (things of the world); the other disciples (*cf.* Matt 26.33)?

One commentator notes the different words used: Peter is to care for both the young (lambs) and old (sheep). Others distinguish between two different Greek words for “love”—*agapao* and *phileo*—though there may be no meaning in the distinction.

Peter’s reply to Jesus: “you know everything” is an affirmation of our Lord’s omniscience

Peter is recommissioned: “Jesus as the true shepherd (John 10.11, 14) appoints Peter and other apostles to be subordinate shepherds (see 1 Peter 5.1-4). Peter will demonstrate his love for Jesus by loving God’s people and feeding them with his Word.” ~ *ESV Study Bible*

“stretch out your hands” indicates the manner of Peter’s death. His calling from Jesus and his commitment to love and follow him will lead to his crucifixion.

III vv. 20-25 **Peter inquires of John’s future—the one whose Gospel testimony we are reading**

“This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things”—William Barclay writes: “Paul might be the pioneer of Christ, Peter might be the shepherd of Christ, but John was the witness of Christ.”

“John’s closing observation, ‘the world itself could not contain the books,’ emphasizes the limitless magnitude of all that Jesus accomplished for mankind’s salvation as the eternal Son of God (see 1.1-3) through his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension.” ~ *ESV Study Bible*