

“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES

#37: “Jesus’ Appearances After the Resurrection”

SCRIPTURE: John 20:19-21:25

First of all, this morning, note that after showing Himself to Mary Magdalene,

JESUS APPEARED TO THE TEN DISCIPLES (20:19-23).

On Sunday evening the disciples, minus Thomas, were gathered behind locked doors in a secret location in Jerusalem. They were afraid the Jews who facilitated the crucifixion of Jesus would come after them also.

To their surprise, to say the least, Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst. ***“Peace be with you,”*** He said before the disciples could take another breath. Awestruck, none of the disciples could say a word.

So, Jesus showed them where the nails had pierced His hands and where the spear had pierced His side. And when they saw that it was really Jesus, their awe turned to gladness.

At this point, Jesus said again, ***“Peace be with you,”*** and then ***breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”*** Wow! That’s some kind of power – power to forgive sins! They didn’t have such power before. Why? Because Jesus had not died on the cross, and because they had not received the Holy Spirit.

Who else had this power? None else. I repeat, none else. However, in Acts 8, Simon, a sorcerer, believed and was baptized. When he saw that the apostles could lay hands on believers and convey to them the power of the Holy Spirit, he offered them money that he might have such power. The apostles severely rebuked him and told him to repent.

Needless to say, with the death of the last apostle, the imparting the power of the Holy Spirit ended.

Then, John tells us how

JESUS MAKES A BELIEVER OUT OF “DOUBTING” THOMAS (20:24-29).

Thomas was absent when Jesus appeared in the midst of the disciples who were in a secret location where the doors were locked, so when the ten told him that they had seen the Lord, he didn't believe them. He said, ***“Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will not believe.”***

Well, just eight days later, when the disciples were again in the secret location with the doors locked, Thomas was with them when ***Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you,”*** and then said to Thomas, ***“Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve but believe.”***

And Thomas, when he could finally speak, said, ***“My Lord and my God!”*** What a fool Thomas must have thought himself to be. How could he have doubted? What made him a doubter?

You know, this is the case with a lot of people today – they believe but they don't believe – they're “doubting Thomases.” They believe that Jesus is coming again, but they live as if He won't. They believe Jesus will see them through a crisis time, but they worry and fret anyway. Like the father of the boy in Mark 9 who had the unclean spirit that caused him to be mute and deaf, they need to say, ***“I believe; help my unbelief!”***

Jesus responded to Thomas, ***“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”***

What about you? Do you have to see to believe?

And then John wrote:

MANY SIGNS THAT JESUS DID HAVE NOT BEEN WRITTEN DOWN (20:30-31).

By the word “*signs*” he’s referring to miraculous things, like healing, and turning water to wine.

He goes on to write that *“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.”*

Of course, the “*life*” he’s talking about is *everlasting life*. John’s main purpose in writing this gospel account is that people might read it and believe in Jesus.

Then the apostle goes on to describe how

JESUS APPEARED TO SEVEN DISCIPLES ON THE SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE (21:1-14).

Acts 1:3, which was written by Luke, says, *“He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”* He had sent word by the women for His disciples to meet Him in Galilee. They didn’t go right away, so Jesus appeared to them twice before they got there. Here in chapter 21, they have arrived in Galilee, and while they were waiting for Jesus, they resumed their former occupation.

The seven disciples are fishing in the Sea of Galilee, but John refers to it as the Sea of Tiberias. The sea was known by both names. Why did John decide to call it the Sea of Tiberias? One explanation is that since “Tiberias” is the Roman name, it indicates that John was hoping his gospel account would be read and considered by the whole Roman world.

These disciples had been fishing all night, but they hadn’t caught anything. They were fishing with a net. I wonder how many times they threw out their net and pulled it in empty that night. No telling...

Along about sunrise, they heard a voice calling to them: *“Children, do you have any fish?”* They said, *“No.”*

The voice said to them, *“Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.”* I can imagine Peter saying, “Right side

of the boat? Why does it matter which side of the boat we fish on?" Grumble, grumble.

But they tossed their net on the right side anyway. . . and they caught so many fish that the net was too heavy to haul in!

About that time, John saw that the voice on the shore belonged to none other than Jesus Himself. He said to Peter, ***"It's the Lord!"*** And immediately Peter jumped out of the boat and swam to shore, leaving the rest of the disciples to row the boat to shore, dragging the net full of fish.

When they got to where Jesus was, they found that He'd cooked breakfast for them, so, they all sat down to eat. By the way, John tells us that there were ***"153 large fish"*** in the net.

Then John tells us that at some point

JESUS QUESTIONED PETER ABOUT HIS LOVE FOR HIM (21:15-19).

He said, ***"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"*** In other words, "Do you love me more than these other apostles do?"

Let me remind you of what Peter said the night of the last supper when Jesus said, ***"Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."*** Peter said, ***"Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."*** Then, you remember, Peter denied even knowing Jesus, three times.

Peter answered, ***"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."*** Jesus said, ***"Feed my lambs."***

Then Jesus asked him the same question two more times, and two more times Peter said, ***"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."*** Jesus said, ***"Tend my sheep...feed my sheep."***

Now, why would Jesus ask Peter such a question, and why would He ask it three times? Is it not obvious that the three-fold question parallels the three-fold denial Peter was guilty of?

A very interesting thing shows up in the Greek that doesn't appear in the English translation. In the first two times Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, He used the Greek verb *agapao*. The third

time He used the Greek *phileo*. And in all three answers, Peter used *phileo*. *Agapao* is unconditional Christian love; *phileo* is brotherly love. Both are used to describe the love God has for us. For example, in John 3:16, where Jesus says, ***“For God so loved the world...”*** the Greek for *loved* is a form of *agapao*; in John 16:27, where Jesus says, ***“...for the Father himself loves you...”*** He used a form of *phileo*; and in John 13:34-35, where Jesus speaks of ***“a new commandment...that you love one another,”*** He uses a form of *agapao*; and in John 15:19, where Jesus says, ***“...the world would love you as its own,”*** He uses a form of *phileo*.

The bottom line is that these two words, *agapao* and *phileo* are both translated “love,” and they are often used interchangeably. To assign any significance to Jesus’ use of the two words would be pure speculation.

Finally,

JOHN CLAIMS TO BE THE DISCIPLE WHO HAS WRITTEN THESE THINGS.

Verse 20 says, ***Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?”***

Why does John refer to himself as ***“the disciple whom Jesus loved”***? He is not referred to this way by any of the other gospel writers. He alone refers to himself as ***“the disciple whom Jesus loved.”*** Apparently, John had a closer relationship with Jesus than did the other disciples. When Jesus asked John to take care of his mother, that becomes very apparent.

John lived out his life well toward the end of the first century on the isle of Patmos, where the Lord gave him the book of Revelation, and then in Ephesus, where he continued to teach and preach. The other disciples all died prematurely, and most of them were executed. Tradition has it that John was “boiled in oil” but survived the ordeal. He eventually died of natural causes.

IN CLOSING...

In the last verse, John wrote: “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

So we end our Journey Through the Gospel of John.