

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JOHN 20-21

For the disciples the resurrection was a surprising and happy ending to what had been a sad story. *But it was more...* it launched them on a new adventure.

The resurrection was the beginning of faith - not its ending. After the resurrection the disciples would need more faith not less. Jesus was now alive and well, and His disciples would still be expected to follow Him.

In a scene from the 1977 television miniseries, “[Jesus of Nazareth](#),” the political Jew who conspires with Judas, enters the empty tomb and discovers that the Man he helped crucify has risen from the dead.

He gazes off into the distance, and whispers to himself, “[Now it begins, now it all begins...](#)” Tonight, we study the end of *a Gospel* and the start of *the Gospel!*

Remember John 19 recorded the bloody ordeal.

It began with Jesus’ scourging and it ended with His burial... in between were abuse, nails, searing agony, humiliation, unimaginable pain, a broken heart...

Jesus gives it all... His back to the executioners... His garment to the soldiers... His mother to John... His spirit to the Father... His life for you... Pilate then gives the body of Jesus to a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea.

Sadly, they were in a rush. *Joseph, and Nicodemus, and the women...* At this point, the traditions of **their Passover Seder**

were more pressing than providing Jesus, **their Passover Savior**, a descent burial.

Considering their time constraints, they did the best they could - then rolled the stone over the mouth of the tomb. They decided to return on Sunday morning and finish the job. It's now *"the first day of the week..."*

Chapter 20 begins, *"On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb."* The Greek word that gets translated, *"early,"* is a technical term. It referred to the fourth and last watch of the night - from 3:00 AM to 6:00 AM.

Mark 16:2 says the women came *"when the sun had risen."* John says *"while it was still dark."* Perhaps they left in the dark, but arrived after sun-up. Matthew says the women came as the day *"began to dawn."*

"Then she (Mary Magdalene) ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved (this was the special title John used for himself), and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

At this point, Mary doesn't realize Jesus had risen.

"Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first." John was younger and perhaps in better shape.

I'm sure, Peter took off sprinting, but *petered out*. He'd been eating a lot of crow (or rooster) over the previous days. It had all gotten a little heavy on him.

Verse 5 “And he (John), stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.” And here's every mom's favorite part of the Easter story... She points this out to her kids, that even after His resurrection Jesus folded His clothes!

Verse 8 “Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also...” John had won the race, and looked in the tomb, but he waited on Peter to catch up and actually enter. Now he follows Peter into the tomb.

“And he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.” The Greek term translated, “saw,” means “to see with comprehension and understanding.”

Something caught John's attention and sparked his faith... *maybe it was the folded clothes*. Perhaps John figured if the body had been moved the grave clothes would have gone with the corpse. If robbers tampered with the body they wouldn't have taken the time to fold the clothes. *The folded clothes meant Jesus had risen!*

Seriously, I think we should add “neatness” to the virtues of Jesus. That John saw the folded clothes - *or the way they*

were folded - He knew the tidying-up was by Jesus. *By the way, today Jesus is tidying-up lives!*

“Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb.” Mary had returned for a second inspection.

“And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.” Bible commentator Warren Wiersbe says this resembled the Ark of the Covenant in the OT.

Between God’s Law inside the Ark, and God’s love above the Ark - sat *the mercy seat*. It’s where the blood was applied. It’s where *the demands of the Law* and *the love of God* were reconciled. And at either end of the mercy seat were two angels. The angels that appeared here remind us that Jesus is our mercy seat.

“Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” The term means “wailing.” Mary wasn’t just *whimpering and sniffing*, she was *balling her eyes out*.

“She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.”

Understand the scene, two angels in white - *these are obviously angels* - they're sitting at the head and foot of where the body laid. And Mary could care less about the angels. She’s upset. **She’s missing Jesus.**

And here’s the point, when you’re longing for Jesus no other substitute will do - not even an angel or two.

Every so often, the church gets preoccupied with angels. A fascination arises, books get written... the Christian community goes on an “*angel craze.*”

A few years ago “[Touched by an Angel](#)” was the popular show on television. Yet here, Mary sees and speaks to two angels, but her heart and mind are preoccupied with Jesus. Spiritual phenomena, and supernatural manifestations, even *angelic visitations* are no substitute for Jesus. You can mistakenly allow the things of God to distract you from God Himself.

Angels testify of Jesus, they never take His place.

Verse 14, “**Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus...**” *Why did she not know?*

We’re not told... It could be a spiritual blindness. When the risen Lord joined the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, Luke says, “**Their eyes were restrained.**”

It could be, that since Mary had concluded that Jesus was dead, and had no expectation of seeing Him alive, she just failed to recognize the living Lord.

But there's a more likely explanation I tend to favor... Isaiah 52:14 predicted that Messiah's visage would be so marred and disfigured He would no longer even look like a man. The cruelty and brutality of the Romans insured the fulfillment of this prophecy.

His face was beaten. His brow was punctured with thorns. His beard plucked out. No doubt, if Jesus had been given a funeral it would've been closed-casket.

Jesus could've passed for a boxer who had gone 15 rounds - or resembled the victim of a car crash who had been thrown face first through the windshield.

Later in John 20 we'll see scars in Jesus' hands and side. *Why then wouldn't there also be scars on His back, brow, face?* I believe Mary failed to recognize Jesus because His face was scarred and disfigured.

His appearance was unlike the Man she had known.

In Revelation 5:6, this same John sees Jesus in heaven, "I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne... stood a lamb as though it had been slain..." Apparently, Jesus still bears the scars of crucifixion.

It may be a shocker when we get to heaven and see Him face to face. You'll weep when you see His scars, and realize what your sin cost Him. It's said, "The only thing in heaven that's man-made are Jesus' scars."

Yet those same scars will remove all doubt that He really loves you. Over time you'll grow to love His scars. Pockmarks and scars are repulsive on earth, but in heaven you'll admire Jesus' scars for all eternity.

But for the moment, outside the empty tomb, it was His scars that blinded Mary from identifying her Lord.

Verse 15, "Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener (notice it must've been a garden tomb), said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus said to her,

"Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher)."

When He spoke her name it opened her eyes.

And I'm sure it was the way Jesus spoke her name. When Mary's mom called her name it was to scold. When the men in her life spoke her name they were trying to hit on her. When her neighbors said "Mary" they were out to judge. But when Jesus spoke Mary's name it communicated forgiveness and acceptance. When Jesus said, "Mary," she knew she was loved.

Listen... can you hear Jesus speaking your name?

Notice too, how Mary refers to Jesus. A Jew could show his or her teacher varying degrees of respect.

At the lowest level you could call him, "rab." To add a measure of respect you used the term, "rabbi." The highest honor was "*rabboni*" - *what Mary called Jesus.*

Verse 17 "Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"

We're not told of her posture, but we assume that Mary fell on her face and grabbed the Master's feet.

Think of all that Jesus had meant to Mary... Earlier in life, she played the prostitute and was a sleepover for demons. When she met Jesus He turned her whole life right-side up. She was *freed and forgiven*. The carpenter from Nazareth had built for her a new life.

Thus, when Mary lost Jesus she lost everything!

She had no family, or friends, or businesses to return to like the other disciples. Mary was homeless.

This is why Mary Magdalene clung to Jesus with all her might. She'd seen Him crucified - now she'd never let Him go. She wanted Him to stay with her forever.

But Jesus redirects her affections with what seems like cryptic words, *"Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended..."* Jesus is setting Mary at ease. She has nothing to fear. Her relationship with Him isn't ending. It's just changing. He's saying, *"I'm only here a short time. Don't get attached to Me in my present, physical form. When I ascend to the Father we'll still relate, but in a new way - spiritually not tangibly."*

Mary, like you and me, will need to learn to relate to Jesus through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will now dwell inside of Mary. Through the Holy Spirit she'll continue in the mercy she has received from Jesus. Thus, *rather than tighten her grip, she needs to strengthen her faith.*

Verse 18 sums up the encounter, *"Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her."*

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut..." The Greek word is very forceful. It means *"locked and bolted."* The frightened disciples had barricaded themselves in.

This makes the suggestion that the disciples beat up the Roman guards and stole the body of Jesus to foster a hoax -

preposterous! These timid disciples were too afraid to venture out into their front yard.

But Jesus stuns them, “Where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

This is the first time the risen Lord appears to the disciples since they forsook Him and denied Him.

I'm sure they were afraid of this encounter. They deserved His wrath and condemnation. Instead, His first words conveyed forgiveness, “Peace be with you.”

“Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.” Realize Jesus’ resurrected body was not a different body. It was the body born to Mary. It walked on water. It was the body nailed to the cross. You could see the scars that remained from the ordeal.

The same chemicals and organs that died - and had begun to deteriorate - were halted by God. In some way when He revived Jesus’ body, God reassembled its molecules in a new structure and with new features.

Jesus’ resurrected body could now pass through walls and travel distances instantly - yet it was tangible and touchable. It could handle a plate at a fish fry. This was really the body of Jesus - ghosts don't eat fish.

Jesus was no longer *flesh and blood* - His blood had been spilt. But He was still *flesh and bone*. Jesus’ glorified body

was the same body Mary laid in the manger, yet soon it would ascend into the clouds.

Through the process of resurrection it emerged no longer bound by the limits of time and space.

Think of a historic building damaged by a fire. In the renovations the older structure gets rebuilt, but included are much needed upgrades. It gets modified. It's the same building, but it's new and improved.

And this is what we can look forward to when Jesus raptures the Church. Jesus is called **“the first fruits of the resurrection.”** He's the prototype. We too will receive resurrection bodies with Jesus-like properties.

No more will I worry about locking my keys in the car! Rather than pick the lock I'll just slide my atoms between the atoms of the car panel. *Presto, I'm in!*

Actually, I won't need a car, or an airplane. *Want to go to Honolulu, just snap your fingers!* In fact, Jesus' ascension into heaven proved that not even the earth's gravitational pull will be a concern to the Christian.

As Paul said to the Corinthians, one day these mortal bodies will put on immortality and these corruptible bodies will put on incorruption. *I can't wait!*

Verse 21 **“So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”**

This would've seemed like a stretch to any onlooker.

The disciples had barricaded themselves behind walls - walls of fear and worry - yet Jesus is saying that He's sending them out. **Hey, they'll need some help!**

And here it comes... “And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” The prerequisite for salvation is to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Romans 10:9 declares, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Now that the disciples believe, God’s Spirit enters their spirit and sparks a new birth in them.

I believe the original disciples became born again.

In John 14:17 Jesus had said of the Holy Spirit, “He dwells with you and will be in you.” Here Jesus makes good on that promise. The disciples receive the Spirit.

In the Garden of Eden God breathed into the nostrils of the first man, Adam, and he became a living soul. Now Jesus breathes on His disciples and they come alive spiritually through the work of His Spirit.

Verse 23, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” In Matthew 18 Jesus gave His original disciples the authority to “bind and loose” – that was rabbinical language for “prohibiting and permitting.”

To bind is to prohibit. To loose is to permit.

This was a special authority that allowed the Holy Spirit to establish normative faith and practice for the church. It’s what guided the early church fathers in the canonization of the NT. Because Jesus limited this authority to the first apostles (and their representatives) the church could identify the Spirit’s inspired writings.

This laid the foundation for orthodox Christianity.

And here Jesus extends that authority to repentance and forgiveness. *How does a person know they've received forgiveness? Does God tear up the ticket? Does He issue you a certificate of pardon?* No, we gain assurance of salvation when we meet the conditions established by the disciples who first followed Jesus. And their conditions were two-fold: *repent and believe.*

This “binding and loosing” is what happened in Acts 15 when the Church in Jerusalem met to decide if Gentile believers still needed to be circumcised.

The verdict of course was “No.” Salvation was by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

The same applies today. In fact, it will never change since the men who were in charge of determining this doctrine are all dead. This was a special authority Jesus gave to His original men and it ended with them.

“Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.”

The first disciples were granted special authority, *but don't think faith came easy for them?* It didn't. Case in point was Thomas. He wasn't around when Jesus first appeared. He had to learn faith the hard way...

And Thomas learns another important truth taught in Hebrews 10:25 “Do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together...” As Thomas discovered when believers gather the risen Christ shows up. Miss a *meeting* with Christians and

you might miss *meeting* the risen Lord. I'll bet Thomas was never *remiss* again.

“The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So (Thomas) said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” Thomas was a hard core skeptic. He wanted tangible proof. He was a “*show me*” disciple. He wasn't going to believe without evidence.

“And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” Again Jesus comes to them with the intention of peace.

“Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” We're not told Thomas' reaction, but I'm sure the offer melted his unbelief and doubt. In the presence of the risen Lord, he dropped to his knees...

“And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” Note Thomas calls Jesus “*God*” and He says nothing to rebuke or correct Him. It's blasphemy for a human to receive worship, but Jesus was no mere mortal. As Thomas put it, He is “*Lord and God.*”

This is one of the strongest affirmations of the deity of Jesus in all the Bible, and how ironic, it comes from the lips of a notorious doubter. Blaise Pascal once said, “*Only he who*

doubts can truly believe." Working through honest doubt is what makes a stronger faith.

Verse 29, "Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

The world today is dominated by a Thomas mentality toward faith - "seeing is believing." But Jesus teaches us that the opposite is true, "believing is seeing."

Wait until you see and you'll wait too late. The next time the risen Lord appears on earth it will be to bring judgment. Today, we see through spiritual eyes.

The resurrection appearances of Jesus lasted a mere seven weeks. When Jesus ascended to heaven they stopped. Today we don't see until we believe. It's post-faith, that Jesus opens our eyes - and helps us sense His presence, feel His power, know His mercy.

Verse 30 "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book..." This is "the most frustrating verse in the Bible." *Just imagine all the wonders that went untold?*

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." We don't have *all there is to know*, but we do have *all we need to know*.

None of the four Gospels were intended to be typical *biographies* on the life of Jesus - thus, they leave out standard biographical information. The Gospels were *testimonies* - written to provoke faith. They were lengthy

witnessing tracks to prove that Jesus is God and by believing in Him we can have eternal life!

John continues in Chapter 21, “After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (or Galilee), and in this way He showed Himself: Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, 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 going with you also.” They go fishing, but again taste failure... “They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.”

One commentary I read points out that Peter's words in the Greek are in the present progressive tense, which mean they speak of a continual activity. He's not suggesting a recreational trip. *He's returning to work!*

Remember, Peter was a fisherman by trade. He left behind a business to follow Jesus. The 3½ years on the road with Jesus had been thrilling days - but now its time to get back to the real world - its time to be responsible again. The heady days of faith in God for his next meal, or a place to sleep, were over. It's time again to wet a few nets - start taking care of business.

If it's true Peter was returning to his old vocation it's obvious why. I'm sure he felt that his days in the ministry were over. He had failed so catastrophically.

The break up of his faith was an 8.0 on the Richter scale. Peter's denial of Jesus was the big one. *How could God ever use him again in any official capacity?*

Hey, it was fun while it lasted, but ole Peter figured it would never be the same. I'm sure he felt that he was out of a job and it was time to look for secular work.

When we fail in one area it's common to bolster our sagging self-esteem by falling back on an old proficiency. If he couldn't make it as a disciple, Peter knew he could catch fish. Yet notice the words, *"they caught nothing."* Let me suggest if you've been called to serve the Lord in a certain capacity you will be neither happy or successful doing anything else.

Paul wrote in Romans 11:29, *"the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."* God sees to it the only fishing Peter will ever be good at, is fishing for men.

Verse 4 *"But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" "You caught anything?"*

"They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." I love Warren Wiersbe's comment, "The distance between success and failure was the width of the ship!" Apparently, they weren't off by much.

Peter and his pals were extremely discouraged. Now add fishing to their failures. But they were closer to success than they realized. All they needed was a little fine tuning - just a few words of direction from Jesus.

Perhaps you've tackled a task that's gotten the best of you. You feel as if you've got a long way to go. But you may be closer to success than you think, *just the width of a boat.* You

thought the task was a lost cause, but all you really lack is a little divine fine-tuning.

“So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.” Remember, this wasn’t the first time this had happened. Luke 5 records a similar incident earlier in Peter and John’s experiences with Jesus. The similarity between the two miracles had to have caused some recognition...

“Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, **“It is the Lord!”** As soon as John saw that the nets were full it clicked. His head spins in the direction of the man onshore and shouts, *“Guys, it’s the Lord!”*

I believe John included this story to teach us how to relate to the risen Christ. You never know when Jesus will reveal Himself... Jesus is alive and well. He’s running around loose. Jesus is out there, somewhere, and at times, when we least expect it - when we’re wrapped up in ordinary stuff - like pastoring, or fishing, or even working - Jesus suddenly reveals Himself!

It’s also interesting that John, *“that disciple whom Jesus loved,”* was the first to shout, *“It’s the Lord.”*

Remember, John sat next to Jesus at the Last Supper. He was the disciple who laid his head on Jesus’ shoulder. It’s revealing that the disciple *closest to Jesus’ heart was first to recognize His presence.*

I believe the more time we spend with Jesus - the more we pray and study His Word - the quicker we’ll be to hear His voice or recognize His movements.

Verse 7 “Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea.” The outer garment was bulky and heavy. Peter took it off to work.

And you wonder why in the world he put it on to take a swim? He puts on his down-lined parka to jump into the water. **Hey, Peter is just being Peter.** He's reacting not thinking. Peter was an impulsive person.

But give him credit. He was never short on passion and enthusiasm. **Whenever Peter saw Jesus he was always first to jump in!** In that sense, let's be like him.

Verse 8 “But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about 200 cubits (or 300 feet)), dragging the net with fish.

Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread.”

Jesus already had breakfast on the fire. And in a sense he'd set up a classroom. These were the props He'd use to teach His disciples a lesson...

Remember where Peter denied the Lord? By a fire of coals. Notice too, bread and fish were the elements Jesus used to feed the 5000. And it was that miracle that led directly to Peter's stunning confession a few days later at Caesarea Philippi, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."** I think **the catch** and **the campfire** were visual aids to get Peter's attention.

Verse 10, “Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.” Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, 153; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.”

A wet net and 153 large fish would’ve weighed several hundred pounds. That Peter dragged it to shore by himself confirms that he was a strong man.

There have been volumes written explaining the symbolism of such an exact number. Some folks have taught there’re 153 different types of fish and thus this represented the whole world. I’ve heard it suggested there were 153 nations at the time. John counted the catch and recorded 153 fish. Could it be the number “153” actually means there were 153 fish? Wow!

“Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?” - knowing that it was the Lord.” Notice Jesus invites them not to lunch or dinner, but breakfast.

You eat breakfast in the morning, at the outset of the day. This would be a new beginning for the disciples.

Jesus is about to reinstate His disciples and reaffirm their calling to ministry. It’ll be a new day in their lives.

And notice the precedent... Jesus is about to send the disciples to feed His sheep, but He first feeds them. Here's a foundational principle in the Kingdom, **before you feed others, you first need to be fed by Jesus!**

Verse 13, “Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This is now the third time Jesus

showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"

Here's the question, "*these what?*" English teachers call this *a dangling participle*? Does it mean "these men?" Or "these fish?" *Do you love me more than your former occupation?* Jesus is asking if Peter is willing to leave all a second time and come and follow Him?

I believe Jesus is reminding Peter of the boast he made at the Last Supper. Remember his arrogance in the upper room. In Matthew 26:33 Peter elevated himself above the other disciples and made the haughty statement, "Even if all are made to stumble because of you, I will never be made to stumble."

Jesus is recalling that boast by essentially asking Peter, "If you really loved me more than the other disciples why did you deny Me?" John continues, "(Peter) said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." (Jesus) said to him, "Feed My lambs."

When Jesus asks Peter, "*Do you love Me?*" The Greek word He uses for love is the word "agape."

The Greek language had different words for differing degrees of love. "Agape" was the strongest. It spoke of God's love. It was a sacrificial, unselfish, undying kind of love that Peter had boasted he had toward Jesus.

But now when he responds, "Yes Lord; you know that I love You," Peter uses a different word for love, "phileo" - or

“brotherly love.” “Philadelphia” is the city of brotherly love.” Phileo love was a notch below “*agape*.”

Obviously, this time Peter isn't so quick to boast. He now knows the courage, and boldness, and bravery he thought he had - was missing come crunch time. Peter did love Jesus, but from here on out he would never trust in his own strength to demonstrate that love.

Verse 16, “(Jesus) said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Again it's the Greek word, “*agape*.” And Peter responds again with “*phileo*.” (Peter) said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

Verse 17 “He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved 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, “Feed My sheep.”

This time Jesus alters His question, and says, “*Simon, son of Jonah, do you phileo Me?*” Peter was grieved by this whole line of questioning, but Jesus is revealing that He knows where Peter's at - his strength or lack thereof, is no secret. He's saying, “Peter, it's better to be honest and admit a weakness than make a prideful and rash boast. If phileo is all you've got, I'll take it, and grow it...” Jesus took Peter's *phileo* or *brotherly love* and grew it into *agape* or *sacrificial love*.

And any idea why Jesus repeats His question three times? Peter had denied the Lord *three times*.

Jesus is reinstalling Peter to ministry. He's reversing His failure, and giving Peter a brand new start. In repeating the calling three times He's extending forgiveness to all three denials. What comfort!

As long as the mercy of Jesus is in play the game's never over! There's still another chance for redemption.

And notice what Peter is supposed to do if He loves Jesus... *"Feed My sheep."* The way you love Jesus is by loving His people. You can say you love Jesus, but it rings hollow if you're not willing to feed a few sheep.

When we feed someone's spiritual hunger - or lead a lost soul back into the fold - then we're really loving Jesus, and doing what He's called all of us to do.

Verse 18 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."* This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, *"Follow Me."*

Jesus' words to Peter, *"You will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you, and carry you where you do not wish..."* sound ominous. These words proved to be prophetic of Peter's own crucifixion.

On July 19, 64 AD a fire broke out in the city of Rome. It burned for ten days and scorched 2/3 of the downtown district. Nero fiddled while Rome burned.

Rumors circulated in Rome that *nutzo Nero* had set the blaze - *Nero* was a *pyro*. The Caesar countered those rumors by blaming the inferno on the Christians.

To divert attention from himself, Nero launched a massive round-up of Christian leaders. Peter and Paul were arrested and martyred. Paul was beheaded, and at Peter's request he was crucified upside down.

He chose the unorthodox posture because he felt himself unworthy to be executed like his Lord. Jesus' prediction here in John 21 was ultimately fulfilled.

Earlier in John 13:37, in the upper room, Peter had boasted, "Lord... I will lay down my life for Your sake."

Peter failed that night, and denied the Lord three times, but he got another opportunity to prove His love. And through the power of the Spirit he succeeded. In the end he loved Jesus with **agape** or sacrificial love.

Verse 20, "Then Peter, turning around, saw (John) the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"

I love Peter because I can be just like him. How often do I try this same tactic? The Lord is dealing with me and instead of taking it to heart, I try to shift the focus off myself to someone else, "Lord, what about him?"

If I can find someone worse off than me, then I don't have to deal with my own problems. It's a lot more fun pointing out

someone else's flaws, than it is working on my own. *"Lord what about her? How about him?"*

Verse 22, *"Jesus said to (Peter), "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."*

One of the most subtle traps in the Christian life is to compare *my orders* or *my calling* with someone else's.

The details of God's plan differs from believer to believer. What's deemed necessary for you is not always what God has planned for me - and vice versa.

We all need to **keep our eyes on Jesus** and **keep our nose out of the other guy's business**. If God wants you to be concerned for your brother, He'll lay that brother on your heart. But until He does take the approach, *"What is that to you? You follow me."*

"Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die." Rumors began to swirl around John, that Jesus had made him invincible. *"Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"*

The servant doesn't have a say. It's the Master who gives the orders, not the servant. If Jesus schedules a martyr's death for Peter, and a rapture for John; then so be it. It's His prerogative. We're to follow His orders.

"This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true." John speaks of himself in the third person.

Then closes His Gospel, “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.”