

BIBLE STUDY

The Life of Jesus Christ

The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus

Study Section 12



Jesus Christ: Part 26

Jesus is Risen

Although He was slain by wicked hands, yet the grave could not hold Him. Jesus was the One toward whom the whole of history had been moving towards. Jesus was the true Passover Lamb, the second Adam. On the third day, He rose from the dead, to become the first fruits of them that sleep. Having appeared alive to His Disciples and proved His reality by “many infallible proofs,” He instructed them about how they should continue the work that He had commenced.

Passover Lamb

Everything that happened to Jesus, as John presents it, was to make it clear that He was the true Passover Lamb. Even though He made reference to the fulfilment of a prophecy, when He said, “not a bone of Him shall be broken,” there was a further Biblical echo.

Bible references relating to this verse in John take us back into two Old Testament records which unmistakably link Jesus to the Passover Lamb. In so doing, they direct our thoughts to His resurrection. The first reference is in the Psalms:

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers Him out of them all. He keeps all His bones; not one of them is broken.” Psalm 34:19, 20

The second reference takes us back to the book of Exodus to the ritual of the Passover Lamb:

“It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it.” Exodus 12:46

To ritually preserve the skeleton of the Passover lamb, (i.e., not to break any of the bones of the skeleton), was a direct foreshadow to the true Passover Lamb provided

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by God. It was to suggest that the slain Lamb would live again. It was the doctrine of resurrection.

To “keep the bones” of the Righteous as noted in Psalm 34 was to imply His resurrection unto life. Similarly, fulfilment of Zech. 12:10, quoted in John 19:37, could not occur without Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.

The Second Adam

When Jesus was taken down from the cross, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two very prominent Jews, looked after the needs of His body. Gently, they wrapped His body in a linen cloth, anointed it with ointment and placed it in a tomb. (John 19:40) A great stone, rolled upon the tomb, sealed it. (Matt. 27:60; Mark 15:46) It is recorded of Joseph’s tomb that it was in a garden close to where Jesus was crucified. John takes great care to note that it was, “a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid.”

Once again he provides us with a clear echo from the Old Testament relative to the sacrifice. The fact that the sepulchre had never before been used as a grave seems superfluous to the description “a new tomb.” John must be drawing our attention to something. This clearly designates it as a “clean place” under the law, one that was suitable for the ashes of the sin offering (Lev. 4:12). Additionally, such a location was fit for the ashes of the red heifer, the one sacrifice under the law provided for removal of the defilement caused by association with a dead body. (Numbers 19:9)

Remembering that God’s entire plan of salvation culminated in His Son, as the sacrifice for the atonement of sin, and the One who would gather the righteous and rule the Kingdom, we see echo and a foreshadowing in John’s phrasing regarding this tomb. It was in a garden, and no one had ever yet been buried in it.

The point in history at which there was no death was at the time of the creation of the first man, Adam. He had been up until that point on his own and God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”. Thus God provided Eve and so removed his loneliness. The manner in which He did this is suggestive of death, burial and resurrection. (Gen. 2:18-22) In this symbolic sense, Adam rose from his sleep and met his wife in a garden. (Gen. 2:8)

So also, Jesus rose from the dead in a garden, and there met Mary, eagerly seeking Him. (John 20:15, 16) As such, she was symbolic of the righteous who will be eagerly seeking the risen Christ and His return. The apparent design of John’s words

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is to present Jesus as the second Adam, the Saviour, coming to claim His bride, the Church.

The Jewish Elders

There is a saying that there is no peace for the wicked. All through this period the minds of Annas and his colleagues were plagued by the thought of dreadful possibilities. So much concerning the Nazarine had seemed to happen that day exactly according to the familiar phrases in the Prophets. Jesus was now dead and buried, but the fears of these Jewish rulers were by no means stilled.

The day following the one on which Jesus was crucified was a “Holy Convocation of the Feast,” when people were required to stand apart from routine matters and ponder the meaning of the Feast and of the deliverance that they were observing as it related to the Passover. Both the elders and the people had a lot to think about on the occasion of the Feast in this particular year.

The Elders especially were troubled as they reflected upon the unusual phenomena of the previous day. The darkness that had overshadowed the land, the earthquake, the torn veil of the Temple, were all events which left a feeling of uneasiness and a sense of disquiet and foreboding. The miracles of Jesus were fresh in their memories, as well as His warnings. (Matt. 21:41; 22:7)

But what troubled them most was the resurrection prophesied for the third day. (John 2:18-21; Matt. 16:21; 26:61) Apart from any of Jesus’ public statements, they would have been privy to private comments to His Disciples in this regard, through their conspiracy with Judas.

As they considered the matter, it occurred to them that if the body were stolen, the Disciples would say that He had risen, and Jesus’ claims would be reinforced. Perhaps, in their delusion, they thought that if Jesus was not a fraud, they could delay or hinder Jesus’ emergence from the tomb on the third day through their own feeble efforts. In any event, they approached Pilate, and gained from him an armed guard for the tomb.

The Disciples

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When Jesus was arrested, all the Disciples forsook Him and fled. (Matt. 26:56) While with them, He had warned them many times of His impending sufferings, death and resurrection. (Matt. 16:21; 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-34) They seemed not to hear or understand. They shared the general impression of the people that the Messiah would rule them forever, but found it difficult to accept the thought that the sufferings must precede the glory. (John 12:34) This gap in their understanding persisted beyond the resurrection, as Jesus' question to two of His followers later revealed:

“Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” Luke 24:26

Not having absorbed the significance of Jesus' statements in this regard, His Disciples were grieved and sorrowful. Maybe they thought that all their hopes in Jesus were now ended. John, in fact, clearly states:

“For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.” John 20:9

In looking back over history, we have the advantage of knowing that Jesus was raised. At times, we might have difficulty comprehending their lack of understanding in the view of the time that they had spent with the Lord during His ministry. However, any thoughts of question or criticism should be driven from our minds when we see how their lives were changed. When they finally understood, they became filled with eagerness in the service of their King, and they went out and did a work which transformed the world. We know about the resurrection of Jesus. Thus we should compare ourselves against the standard of their lives once they were fully aware of, and understood the resurrection of Jesus.

The Resurrection - Matthew 28:1-10

Quite unaware of the anointing of the body performed by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James had prepared spices. They came on the first day of the week to do this work. (Luke 24:1; Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1)

As they approached, they found that an Angel of God had descended in radiant glory, broken the seal and rolled back the stone guarding the tomb. The soldiers were petrified and had fainted with fear. Jesus had arisen and left the tomb. (Matt. 28:2-4) The Angel invited their inspection of the tomb, assuring them that Christ had indeed

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risen from the dead. He instructed them to tell the Disciples that Jesus would go before them into Galilee, and would meet them there. (Matt. 28:5-7)

Then, as they turned to hurry away with the news, they were overjoyed to meet Jesus, who confirmed the Angel's instruction to them. (Matt. 28:8-10) The women followed these directions, telling about His resurrection to the Apostles, who disbelieved them. The disciples considered that their words were nonsense. (Luke 24:11) But Peter and John ran to the garden, and entered the tomb. They found only the burial clothes in which He had been wrapped. Once again, John provides a comment unique to his record. He states that the cloth which had been on Jesus' head, was rolled up and separated from the linen wrappings. (John 20:5-8)

We might consider that John is noting a significant fact which he perceived as foreshadowing the association that Jesus would henceforth have with His followers. He, "the head," would be separated from "His body," the Church. Although He would be with them in Spirit, it would not be until after the resurrection and judgment, at His return, that He would be physically united with all His faithful followers, gathered from over the centuries.

The Bribed Soldiers - Matthew 28:11-15

When the soldiers recovered, some of them went to the Chief Priests to tell them what had happened. The Elders worst fears had been realized, and they considered that they must now take emergency action. So the Chief Priests quickly called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. They decided to deny the resurrection and bribe the soldiers to conceal the facts. The guards were told to say that, "His Disciples came by night and stole Him away while they were sleeping." (Matt. 28:13) The Chief Priests had paid to Judas the price of only 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus. It would appear on this occasion that their fears generated a larger reward for lies and treachery;

"...They gave a large sum of money to the soldiers," Matthew 28:12

Journey to Emmaus - Luke 24:13-35

That afternoon, two sad followers were travelling to Emmaus when an apparent stranger joined them, inquiring about their downcast appearance and words. At that point they were blinded as to His true identity. (Luke 24:16) They spoke to Him about Jesus of Nazareth, and told Him of their disappointed hopes: "***But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel...***" Luke 24:21

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They told Him of the rumours of His resurrection, the attempt to confirm it, the discovery that the tomb was empty, “but they saw Him not.” Thus it appears from their words that they were confused and uncertain. (Luke 24:22-24) They still did not realise that the stranger was none other than the risen Christ Himself, who admonished them regarding their foolishness and lack of understanding in regard to what the Prophets had spoken. (Luke 24:25) He then proceeded to teach them, expounding Moses and the Prophets. He told them that what had happened was fulfilment of God’s Word and was required. (Luke 24:26, 27) Their hearts burned within them as He spoke. (Luke 24:32)

Emmaus came into view as the afternoon was waning, and they prevailed upon Him to stay with them. Then as He broke bread with them, and extended it to them, He made Himself known to them. As soon as they recognised Him, He vanished from their sight. (Luke 24:30, 31)

Jesus Appears to His Disciples - Luke 24:36-49

These two believers were so overwhelmed with this, that they arose immediately and made the seven mile journey back to Jerusalem. They located the eleven Apostles who were gathered with others, and presented them with the joyful news. (Luke 24:33) But Jesus meanwhile, had appeared to Peter, and when they burst in to tell their news to the assembled group, they found that Peter had a similar announcement. As they were exchanging news about Jesus, suddenly He, Himself, appeared in their midst. At first afraid, their doubts were soon dispelled and vanished in the joy of reunion with their Master. (Luke 24:36-41)

Jesus provided evidence that He was actually resurrected and not just a spirit or vision. He demonstrated this through scars on His hands and feet, His ability to eat, and the fact that He could actually be touched. (Luke 24:39-43) The Lord then instructed them regarding all things concerning Himself, in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets. (Luke 24:44-48)

Then, and in the days following, the Lord continued His instructions to assist them in their understanding of the Scriptures. He also provided them with the promise of God’s power. They were to be filled with the Holy Spirit, just as He was, to enable them to continue the work that He had commenced. (Luke 24:49)

The Resurrection - Doctrinal Evidence

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The Doctrine of the resurrection is a cornerstone of the hope in Christ. To deny a future resurrection is to overthrow faith in the promise that is provided to all those who follow Jesus Christ:

“Men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus they upset the faith of some.” 2 Timothy 2:18

Paul provided detailed consequences regarding denial of the resurrection:

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, Whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” 1 Cor. 15:12-18

Paul also provided an extensive and impressive list of witnesses who actually saw the risen Christ. (1 Cor. 15:3-8)

The death of Christ was necessary because of existence of sin in the world: ***“He who was delivered up because of our transgressions...”Romans 4:25***

The resurrection of Christ was necessary because of the existence of death in the world. This verse goes on to say: ***“...(He) was raised because of our justification” Romans 4:25***

“Justification,” or final acquittal from the results of sin, without the total abolition of death, is meaningless because it cannot be permanent. As with Christ, resurrection unto life eternal depends upon endeavouring to follow a life of holiness, depending upon grace and forgiveness for the times in which we fail. To begin the race for life, we must leave Adam, (whose we are by natural descent), and enter Christ, (whose we can become by choice): ***“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.” 1 Cor. 15:22***

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The pathway from Adam to Christ is through baptism, which stands for death, and burial of the old way of life, and resurrection to a newness of life;

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead, through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:3, 4

LESSON FOR US

To all true Christians, one of the most certain facts of history is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This fact, the growth of Christianity stemming from it, and the assurance of a risen Christ who has said He will return, places us in the position where we have to consider our own personal standing. Through baptism, we voluntarily associate ourselves with the risen Christ. By a consecrated life, those baptized reveal that they understand “the power of His resurrection.”

“And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;” Phil. 3:9, 10

Test Yourself

1. Briefly discuss in what way Jesus is the second Adam.
2. Briefly describe the events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus.
3. What does the resurrection of Jesus mean for us?

Jesus Christ: Part 27

The Ascension

Before Jesus ascended bodily to the Father, He was with His Disciples for 40 days, (another Bible echo in the number 40), speaking of the things about the Kingdom of God. Much instruction took place during this time of preparation as He made them ready for the work they were to do. He then ascended to the Father, where He remains until the present time, whilst we await His promised return.

Final Instructions - Acts 1:1-3

After the resurrected Lord appeared to His Disciples, He was seen by them “over a period of 40 days,” before He was “taken up.” (Acts 1:3, 11) These were days within which He gave “orders to the Apostles whom He had chosen,” (Acts 1:2), and spoke “of the things concerning the Kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:3)

There was a great deal to be accomplished during those 40 days. They needed instruction regarding the full meaning of the covenants made with Abraham and David. They must understand these promises, and be able to convey them and the hope they represented regarding the Kingdom to all those who would follow. Additionally, they must understand the disciplines that were to be observed and taught consistent with a life of holiness and virtue.

The followers of Christ are intended to constitute a new creation, a multitude to be compared with “one body” having many parts. The “head” was Jesus Christ, whose direction the whole body followed:

“...And every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He (God) put all things in subjection under His (Jesus) feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the Church, Which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1: 21-23

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“He is also head of the body, the Church; and He is the beginning, the first born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.” Colossians 1:18

“Yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him Holy and blameless and beyond reproach - if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel that you have heard...” Colossians 1:22, 23

The “second Adam,” Jesus Christ, was the focal point, or the centre, of this new creation. He reminded His Apostles that, just as He had been sent by the Father, so they were sent by Jesus:

“...Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them...” John 20:21,22

Once again, we find evidence of John’s careful recording in order that we will see the echoes of foreshadows that were completed in Christ. In His wording, we see a virtual re-enactment of Adam’s creation, when God “formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” Jesus breathed on them, and promised that they were to receive the Holy Spirit of His Father. Life was breathed into them and they would become the first of the body of Christ, His Church and future companion and helper (Just as Eve was provided for Adam).

Later on, at Pentecost, the Apostles would receive the Holy Spirit to perform miracles. (Acts 2:1-4) What Jesus was doing while with them was inviting them to embrace the mind of the Spirit, assuring them, that if they did, God would endorse their actions. (John 20:21-23)

Before You Into Galilee - John 21:1,2

Jesus warned His Disciples before His death that Zechariah’s prophecy (13:7) would be fulfilled. He, the Shepherd, would be smitten and they the sheep, would be scattered. (Mark 14:27)

He had then added: *“But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”*
Mark 14:28

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Peter had protested that all others might be offended and fall away, but that he would not. He was told that, “that very night, he would deny his Lord three times.” And so it came to pass. Later, following the resurrection, the Angel at the sepulchre instructed the women:

“But go, tell His Disciples, and Peter, He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you.” Mark 16:7

John, like the other Gospel writers, informs us that immediately after the resurrection Jesus appeared to the Disciples on various occasions in Jerusalem. He concludes the record of these initial appearances with the account of “doubting” Thomas’ acknowledgment of Jesus’ identity, upon seeing the wounds in Jesus’ hands, feet and side. (John 20:26-29) He then says:

“Many other signs, therefore, Jesus also performed in the presence of the Disciples...” John 20:30

He now draws our attention to the fulfilment of the promise that had been made regarding meeting Peter and some of the Apostles in Galilee after His resurrection. It was the action of a shepherd to go before his flock, and it was the duty of a flock to seek and follow the shepherd. So John states:

“After these things, Jesus manifested Himself again to the Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias...” John 21:1

He records that a group of seven Disciples, led by Peter, moved north, and came to the Sea of Galilee, (Sea of Tiberias) which they knew so well. This was the area from which Jesus had first called them. (John 21:2) Thus it was fitting that Jesus should confirm His commandment to them, in a manner that was reminiscent of their activities when He called them in the early days of His ministry. (Luke 5:5) John clearly shows us that this early call was a foreshadowing of their final commission.

Fishing- John 21:1-14

As soon as they returned to familiar surroundings, nothing seemed more natural than that Peter should say, “I am going fishing.” The others agreed with him. Immediately, they entered the boat, and though they tried all night, they caught nothing. (John 21:3)

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Early the next morning, Jesus, (unbeknownst to them), stood on the shore in the half light of dawn. He inquired of their success: "...*Children, you do not have any fish, do you?*" *John 21:5* Following their negative response, He invited them to "cast the net on the right hand side of the boat." They immediately acquired a catch of fish that was so large that they were not able to haul it into the boat. This is the 8th and final sign recorded in John's Gospel.

John recognised the "stranger" on the shore as the Lord. And Peter, with his usual enthusiasm to get to Jesus, jumped overboard and went ashore. The others brought the fish to land, with Peter later joining them in the work. On arriving on shore, it was noted that the Lord had before him a fire on which fish was already cooking. And He had bread. He said, "come and have breakfast," and He gave them the bread and the fish.

Significance of the eighth sign

As suggested earlier there is a close relationship between the eighth sign of John's Gospel and the record in Luke 5: 4-7, when the Disciples netted "a great multitude of fish" at the word of the Lord. On that occasion there was such a great load that their net broke. On that previous occasion, the Disciples had already embraced the Lord's discipleship. They had returned to Galilee with Him following the first Passover visit, and went back to their daily occupation. At that time, however, He had told them that they should remain with Him during His ministry and become "fishers of men." When this was explained to them, "they left everything and followed Him." (Luke 5:11)

On this occasion recorded by John, Peter and the other six Disciples had been sent into Galilee, as sheep in search of their shepherd. They were Apostles (men sent), and as such they should have followed His instruction exactly. Instead they lapsed again into the mundane affairs related to their old life. Jesus, now, once again, provided them with the lesson that there was a great multitude of fish ready to fill the Gospel net for the Kingdom of God. As they performed the work of this calling the Lord would see to it that they would not go hungry.

He signified this by providing them with a breakfast of bread and fish. Consider the full significance. After a hard night's work, they were provided with a meal prepared by Jesus, through no effort of their own. While they carried out His directions regarding this large catch of fish, He, although they had not even been aware that He was observing them, saw to it that they received nourishment, providing their natural needs of the body in regard to sustenance.

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We see further meaning in the detail that John provided. Consider first, the bread and fish that were already prepared when they came ashore after catching the 153 fish. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is identified with the bread of life. The seven Apostles were His early Disciples. As such they were represented by the fish that He had prepared and were now “ready” to perform His work as “fishers of men.” Jesus’ efforts satisfied their hunger.

Additionally, we are told that in the first miracle of the great catch of fish, He was in the boat with them. (Luke) In this final miraculous catch, recorded by John, He was on the shore, separated from them. They carried out this work of netting the fish on their own, under His direction, which He provided from a distance. Similarly, we know that He would shortly go to His Father and that they would continue in their labours on earth, while He provided direction from “His Father’s side.”

Finally, we might look for significance in the fact that John was very careful to record the specific number of fish that they caught. In the previous record of a miraculous catch of fish, as recorded in Luke, there was no record of number. In fact, it is very unusual that professional fishermen would count the number of individual fish caught in their nets during a night’s work.

It is reasonable, therefore, that a Bible student might ask why John was so careful as to specify the number of fish caught. Over the years thousands of the readers of this Gospel have suspected a special significance here. We suggest that there is a sound instinct behind this. Many theories have been developed, and provide a challenge for Bible students interested in pursuing such matters. For the purposes of these lessons, however, we suggest as a starting point, only two.

The second book of Chronicles, chapter 2, verse 17, refers to 153 thousand and 600 as the number of “strangers,” that is Gentiles, in Israel who were numbered by David, the ancestor of Christ. In Exodus 30:14-16, such numbering of the people is associated with atonement and redemption. Is 153 representative of all those nations, other than Israel, who would now be redeemed through the atoning work of Jesus?

The second suggestion stirs the imaginations of all students who search for significance in Scriptural records such as this. Contemporary Greek Zoologists asserted that the sea contained precisely 153 different species of fish. This number could then be seen as symbolizing or representative of individuals out of all nations within the Gospel net.

Shepherding the Sheep - John 21: 15-19

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These verses provide an excellent example for using study aids, such as concordances, if we wish to read the Bible effectively. Jesus' three questions, Peter's replies, and the reference to the sheep, do not appear to present a clear message when considered only in the English translations. If we go back to the meanings of the Greek words, the record comes alive with additional significance.

We should not be intimidated by this, because a total understanding of the significance of such verses is not essential to our salvation. But the meaning that is clarified through such understanding provides an insight into an integral part of being a disciple of Christ. All such meaning and clarification helps us in seeking to follow what Christ desires of us.

The principle involved is provided throughout the message. An understanding of Jesus' message to Peter, as applied through John's record, brings us closer to that principle. It is our privilege to search it out, and share Peter's understanding and learning, if we so desire.

But, in Jesus' mercy, our salvation is not dependent upon understanding and explaining every point that is recorded, such as in the message that Jesus presented to Peter and the other Apostles on this occasion. Salvation in Jesus, is not an intellectual exercise. His Apostles did not understand every message that was presented, and yet they were chosen and accepted. The important issue is to believe, realise your limitations, and needs, repent and be baptised into an understanding of salvation and hope in Christ. Never abandon this hope because you feel that you cannot understand every shade of meaning and significance in the Gospel record.

Coming back to John's record of the breakfast meal, John records no conversation until after the meal was finished. Jesus then addressed Peter: "...*Simon, Son of John, do you love Me more than these?*" *John 21:15*

We must here remember Peter's boast that, although the other Apostles might desert their Lord, he would never do so, thus implying a greater love. The verb that Jesus used for "love" was "agapao," meaning to love sacrificially, in the sense of preferring others, while denying self. The Apostle Paul provides us with an excellent definition of this type of love:

"Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the

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truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails..."1 Cor. 13:4-8

Peter could not claim this, but he did have a strong affection for the Lord. So, in replying, he used the Greek word "phileo," which means to love affectionately: **"...Yes, Lord; You know that I love You..." John 21:15**

Peter did not now claim to love the Lord "more than these." His experiences had humbled him. The Lord replied: **"...Tend My lambs." John 21:15**

The word for "tend" used here means to pasture. It is the duty of shepherds to lead the sheep into pasture, not to neglect the flock by divided loyalties. The Lord then asked Peter another question, this time retaining agapao, but dropping the words "more than these:" **"...Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" John 21:16**

This question, relating to Jesus alone, essentially challenged Peter's own sacrificial devotion to the Lord. His reply, again using phileo, was an admission that the love that he felt for the Lord could not justly be described by agapao. It was emotional, but did not include a full intellectual understanding of the agapao type of love: **"...Yes Lord; you know that I love you..." John 21:16**

Back came the Lord's reply: **"...Shepherd my sheep." John 21:16**

This represented an extension of the work of the shepherd. The Greek word now used by Jesus in regard to the sheep was changed. The one He used now meant to act as a shepherd in the sense of leading or governing. Additionally, a shepherd's duty extends to other members of the flock, the sheep, as well as the younger lambs. By saying, "I'm going fishing," Peter had led the other sheep in Jesus' flock in the wrong direction. He had failed as a shepherd, even though Jesus had singled him out.

There was one final question that the Lord asked, a stinging one, which Peter would find difficult to bear: **"...Simon, son of John, do you love me?" John 21:17**

This time, Peter was extremely grieved. The Lord had used Peter's own word, phileo. Was it truly a fact, as Peter had already twice claimed, that he really did feel emotionally "tied" to the Lord? Peter burst in with a vehement declaration of his love: **"...Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (phileo) Thee..." John 21:17**

Jesus replied: **"...Tend My sheep." John 21:17**

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Jesus once again reminded him of the duty to lead the sheep into pasture. This time in using this word, He referred to, not just the lambs as in the first instance, the new and the young members of the flock, but to all of His sheep.

Peter had denied his Lord three times, and three times he had now been questioned and had affirmed the tender regard for which he held his Lord. There is a simple test of the regard that one has for another and that is what one is prepared to do about it. Peter was, therefore, admonished to pasture the lambs, then govern the sheep, then pasture the whole flock, whether sheep or lambs.

Our love, whether “agapao” or “phileo,” must be revealed in action: ***“Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.” 1 John 3:18***

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.” 1 John 5:2,3

In the Gospel record, John goes on to record that, as the Lord pointed out, Peter would come to manifest his love for Him sacrificially. Before him lay the prospect of crucifixion. In this, he would indeed follow his Lord to the ultimate. (John 21:18, 19)

The Gospel of the Kingdom - Acts 1:4-8

In addition to matters relating to personal conduct, the Lord spoke to them “of the things concerning the Kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:3) He explained to them the Old Testament Prophecies, answered their questions, and helped their understanding.

They knew that Israel was once the Kingdom of God on earth, (1 Chr. 29:23; 28:5). Through disobedience, it had been broken up. (Ezekial 21:27)

They remembered how the Lord had spoken of these things to the Jewish people as He went from city to city. (Matt. 21:43) He had warned the leaders of the Nation that authority in the Kingdom, in the day of its restoration, would be taken from them and given to His Disciples. (Luke 12:32) The Kingdom would be restored under Christ, and the Disciples would be rulers in that Kingdom. (Micah 4:8; Luke 1:32, 33) In fact, Jesus had specifically told Peter and the other Apostles:

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“...Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel.” Matthew 19:28

But when? The Disciples pondered the question, and they no doubt all hoped and prayed that it would be soon.

Forty days after His resurrection, the Lord took His Disciples up to the Mount of Olives, for the time had come for His ascension. (Luke 24:50, 51) The Disciples did not realise that this was the last time that they would see the Lord before His second coming. Before leaving Jerusalem, He had commanded them to return to the city:

“And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” Luke 24:49

“And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, which, He said you heard of from Me; For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Acts 1:4,5,

As they had been walking to the Mount of Olives with Jesus, they had been grappling with the time of restoration of the Kingdom. They did not understand how far away it was. When they reached the Mount, they asked their question: ***“...Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the Kingdom of Israel?” Acts 1:6***

They clearly believed that the Kingdom would be restored to Israel, and that Jesus would have power to accomplish the restoration. The only question was, “when”?

Jesus replied: ***“...It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;” Acts 1:7***

He then confirmed that they would receive the power from God, and would witness to the truth “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

The Ascension - Acts 1:9-12

The Life of Jesus Christ

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The Lord finished speaking to them. Suddenly He left the startled Disciples, ascending into heaven until a cloud received Him out of their sight. But just as suddenly as He had been taken from them, two Angels in white apparel stood before them, and from their lips, the Disciples heard the thrilling message:

“...Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

Acts 1:11

We notice that the Disciples were told that Jesus would come in the same manner as they had seen Him go. As He had departed visibly, so His second coming would be a literal and visible one.

With this wonderful message ringing in their ears, they returned to Jerusalem as the Lord had requested them, to await the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. By its power, they would be able to carry on the work that He had begun.

LESSON FOR US

Today, we are privileged to witness many signs that herald the second coming of the Lord. The return of the Jews, and the existence of the State of Israel, tell us that the time when “the Kingdom will be restored to Israel” is approaching. Other prophecies as well, too numerous to mention in these lessons provide the same message.

Like the Disciples, we now have the opportunity to spend the time at our disposal in preparing for the return of the Lord, and the establishment on earth of the Kingdom of God.

It is fitting to close the lessons of this seminar with the words of Peter, who obviously learned the lessons that Jesus provided to him during those last wonderful days together.

“...He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you may become partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith

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supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about his calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; For in this way the entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, will be abundantly supplied to you.”

2 Peter 1:4-11

Test Yourself

1. Briefly discuss the significance of the disciples catching 153 fish
2. Why did Jesus ask Peter three times if he loved Him?
3. Will Jesus return? Please give reasons for your answer.