

John 21 - Feed my Sheep

21:1-2 GATHERING OF DISCIPLES

The haul of fish in **John 21** is a picture of the kingdom of God when all the saints are gathered together in a fellowship meal. It is the dawn of a new day! **v1 After these things:** Formal closing (epilogue) to his Gospel: **20:30-31**. In the gospel's introduction (prologue) he is the "word made flesh" **Jn 1:1-18**. In **Jn 21** he is the *word made spirit*. **Shewed himself:** Gk. *brightly apparent*. This is the third time: **21:14**. **To his disciples:** The appointment was made by the Lord in the context of Peter's boast: **Mt 26:31-34** (citing **Zech 13:7**). **Sea of Tiberius:** Only so named by John: **Jn 6:1**. Herod was in the process of building Tiberius. **Isa 9:1** says Christ would come to this area, the "Sea of Nations."

v2 Were together: Five apostles, 2 unnamed disciples = 7, the covenant number, cp 5 loaves and 2 fishes. **Sons of Zebedee:** Their title as fishermen, when called to be "fishers of men" at the first haul of fish! **Lk 5:10**. **Key principle:** Preaching the gospel!

21:3-14 THE GREAT HAUL OF FISH

v3 I go a fishing: Back now to the everyday things of life. Christ has a much greater calling for them. **That night:** Fishing in the dark without the Lord's direction. In preaching we need to make good preparation and place it in God's hands. **v4 Morning now come:** literally: "breaking of the day". The resurrection morn, and the great haul of fish! **v5 Children:** means *immature*. Yet a term of endearment **Jn 13:30**. They were invited to Galilee as brethren, now his *children*. **Key Scriptures:** **Heb 2:13** "I and the children which God hath given me." **Psa 45:16** "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children." **Isa 53:10** "he shall see his seed"

v6 Right side: Direction to experienced fishermen. **Multitude of fishes:** From the sea of nations. Figure of increased seed of Jacob: **Gen 48:15-16** "let them grow (margin: let them multiply as fishes increased) into a multitude in the midst of the earth." The story of Ephraim and Manasseh, two sons of Joseph. **v7 Whom Jesus loved:** John's modesty is brushed aside in his use of this treasured expression. Repeated **21:20**. John is a deep thinker. **It is the Lord:** John was the first to comprehend. Peter was the first to act: **Jn 20:4-8**. **Fishers coat:** Word used by LXX (Greek OT) for a distinctive robe (**1 Sam 18:4**; **2 Sam 13:18**) cp **Jn 20:18**. Later Peter said "be clothed in humility" **1 Pet 5:5**. **v8 Two hundred Cubits:** Approximately 100 metres.

v9 Fish laid thereon: Youngs Literal: "a fish". Where did the Lord get this? They never saw him fishing. It was around a coal of fire that Peter denied his Lord 3 times. **v10 Fish now caught:** Roth: "just now caught", ie by his direction he would truly make them "fishers of men" **v11 Simon Peter went up:** Exerting his superior strength (cp **v8**) but his inclusion in the haul would come with humble submission: **Jn 1:18-19**. **Great fishes:** Gk *mega* - a word used for size and quality, typical of the final ingathering. Contrast with the haul of fish: **Lk 5:4-10**.

v11 Full of great fish 153: Along with the Lord's fish there were actually 154 as there was one on the fire (7x22=154). There are 22 letters in Hebrew alphabet. Within those 22 letters you find the Word of God, **Genesis** to **Malachi**. **Psalms 119** is divided into 22 sections, by 22 letters. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh.

In **Psalms 119**, almost every verse tells of God's Word. John's gospel opens with the *word made flesh*. Now the **word is made spirit**, 7 times that! **Net not broken:** "none is lost" **Jn 17:12**. Consider the following important comparison:

Luke 5

First Haul: Call of Gospel

- v6** Good and bad are caught
- v3** Christ is on the water
- v7** Fish are left in the boat
- v4** Nets not let down in a special place
- v6** Nets are rent
- v7** Boat at point of sinking
- v9** Fish are not numbered

John 21

Second Haul: Final Ingathering

- v11** All the fish styled "great"
- v4** Christ is on the land
- v11** Fish are brought to land
- v6** Nets let down on 'right side'
- v11** Net is not rent
- v8** Boat is not overladen
- v11** Exact number given

v12 Come and dine: Literally "breakfast" - as contrasted to the last "supper". This was a new feast with the Lord at the breaking of the day. **Durst ask him:** They knew it was him, but were anxious for confirmation. When he ate with his disciples it was the last supper. **v13 Jesus then cometh:** The Lord comes and takes the initiative. **Taketh bread:** Again "made known in the breaking of bread" **Lk 24:30**. **Fish likewise:** Significant because of their participation. **v14 Shewed him:** Gk. *brightly shining*.

21:15-19 TEST AND COMMISSION OF PETER

v15 "When they had dined: In fellowship with the Lord, including Peter. **Simon Son of Jonas:** His natural descent in contrast to "Peter" the Apostle: **Mt 16:17-18**. The title that Jesus called him in Caesarea Philippi: **Jn 6:69**. **Lovest Thou Me:** Gk. *agapao*, the highest form of love, seeing things from God's viewpoint, but not devoid of emotion. For the ultimate glory of God. **More than these:** Peter had boasted of his superiority over the others: **Mk 14:29** "Even though they all fall away, I will not." His confidence was ill conceived. **Knowest I Love Thee:** Gk. *phileo*. He does not claim *agapao* but a *personal attachment*, nor does he Lord it over his brethren. He is aware Christ knows his thoughts. **Feed My Lambs:** Means to *provide food* for the immature in the ecclesia.

v16 Lovest thou me: Lord retains *agapao* but does not say "more than these." Peter's answer is almost the same. **Knowest I love thee:** Peter still does not claim *agapao* and attributes to the Lord his power of discernment. **Feed my sheep:** This time the word means "shepherd." A more mature, greater responsibility. **v17 Lovest Thou Me:** Lord now uses "phileo". He questions Peter's affection! Awkward questions are getting less and less. **Peter grieved...third time:** Deeply wounded as Christ questions his affection. He would remember his 3 denials. **Thou knowest all things:** Appeal for the Lord to make his own assessment. Peter has no confidence in himself anymore. **Feed my sheep:** means *feed the mature*. Most responsible task of all: **Heb 5:12-14**. As Peter fell in his own estimation so the Lord increased his responsibilities: Now humble, Peter can now teach others.

v18 When thou wast young: Lit. *younger*, in age and maturity. **Gird thyself:** He tried to demonstrate his zeal by impetuous acts e.g. walking on water: **Mt 14:28**, "girding on his fisher's coat" **21:7**



Important Principle - The Shepherd: **Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:1-3; 1 Pet 5:5-6**. "feed the flock of God which is among you." Responsibilities: Feed the flock, strengthen the diseased, heal the sick, bind up broken limbs, bring home sheep; **Ezek 34:11; Mt 18:10-14; Lk 12:42; 15:3-7**. Yahweh our shepherd: **Psa 23:1-3; Isa 63:11-14**. Christ is the good shepherd: **Mt 20:25-28; Mk 10:42-45; Jn 10:4**. The flock is Gods not ours. Shepherds are watchmen who look for danger and protect the flock: **Mic 2:12; 4:8; Ezek 33:3-9; 1 Cor 14:8**. David and Moses learned by experience as shepherds to care for Israel: **Psa 77:20; 78:70-72**. Elders were to be servants: **Lk 22:26-27; Acts 14:23; 1 Thess 5:12; 2 Tim 2:24-26; Tit 1:5;**

v18 Walk: His rash impulsiveness curbed, it is now a case of "follow me." **v19 Stretch forth thy hands:** In willing surrender of self to glorify God. **Carry where thou wouldst not:** Surrender of will in humility. **Signifying what death:** He specified his own type of death: **Jn 12:33; 18:32**. Peter was now fully aware: **2 Pet 1:14**. Tradition was he was crucified upside down (Tertullian, Eusebius) **Follow Me:** Peter is to follow his Lord even to death, as he had been told before: **Mt 16:24**.

21:20-25 THE COMMISSION OF JOHN

v20 Peter Turning About: The Lord evidently moves on, inviting Peter to follow. **Seeth the Disciple:** John follows the Lord without special invitation. The reason? He had a genuine affection for the Lord. **Leaned on his breast:** Being closer to his Lord, the question he mentions was on behalf of Peter: **Jn 13:24-25**. What if John had have said, you are not the one he loves the most? But he didn't. **What shall this man do:** The Greek is abrupt: "Lord, and this one?" (Roth) "Lord, what about him?" (NIV) **v22 Jesus Saith:** The Lord's answer has emphasis on "him", "thou". Each disciple must keep his eye on his Lord, not on each other. NB "if I will". **Tarry till I come:** Lit. "while I am coming" cp. **Rev 1:10**. **v23 Should not die:** **Lk 9:27-28** "Not taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God." Note **2 Pet 1:16-18**. **What is that To Thee:** Each bro/sis has their particular role in the ecclesia. It is God's appointment, not ours: **1 Cor 12:18; Rom 12:3-5**.

21:24-25 JOHN'S CLOSING COMMENT

v24 Testifieth: Formal close is in **Jn 20:30-31**. This is now close of the epilogue. **We know:** That the Son of God has come: **1 Jn 5:18-20**. John always sees himself as part of the whole body: **Rev 1:9**. **v25 Which Jesus did:** As well as the 'signs' recorded **Jn 20:30**. **Contain the books:** **Jn 20:30**. Astonishing conclusion.