

CCF Study Notes
Tuesday 7 AM Study
30 May 2006
John Chapter 21

Before beginning to read from John Chapter 21 let's spend time in prayer, considering the place where Jesus now is – with the Father. Let's ask God that we might:

1. **Wisely** occupy ourselves while waiting for His return;
2. **Consider** the effect that our words and walk have on other believers;
3. **Hear and obey** Christ that our lives may be fruitful;
4. **Know** and enjoy the presence of Christ in our midst;
5. **Love** Christ as we ought;
6. **Feed** and tend the sheep and lambs that belong to Jesus Christ, and
7. **Rejoice** in God's gifts and call without envying or judging others!

This chapter forms an epilogue or postscript to John's gospel. There is no evidence that John's gospel was ever circulated without this chapter. This chapter is an integral and necessary part of John's gospel. John had fully developed the theme of **belief** in the first 20 chapters. As the last of the gospels written, John would have already seen some disturbing tendencies within the churches – as Jesus' letters in Revelation reveal. Those who failed to act out their newfound belief in Christ soon drifted from that belief. Faith without works is dead. So John's gospel ends with a call to action. Let's do something about what we have found in Christ!

Peter decides to go fishing. The disciples who were with him also go fishing. In going fishing, Peter was returning to the occupation he was familiar with. He chose to go back to that which he could do in the flesh, rather than pursuing the ministry Jesus had called him to do in the power of the Spirit. In moments of discouragement or confusion we often return to our old ways which we are comfortable with. Is that the right response?

The fishing expedition was totally fruitless – until Jesus gave them some pointers. This would remind Peter of a previous episode (Luke 5:1-11). The lesson for us is that the encounter for Christ makes us new creatures. Some of the things we used to be good at and really enjoy will no longer be available to us. God has something else in mind for us and renders the old paths dead ends for us. But notice that Peter influenced others as well when he went down the wrong path. We need to be careful that we don't lead others astray.

Notice the joyful exclamation of John, "It is the Lord!" and Peter's jubilant response: "I'm out of here – I can't wait to see Jesus!" We look forward to the day when we meet Jesus, when He calls us to Himself. Will that be a joyful day? Or, like Peter, will there be guilt?

Jesus spent time in fellowship, eating with His disciples. When we find ourselves returning to the old ways it will often be because we have not been in fellowship with God.

The one who was leader in the fishing expedition is the one whom Jesus now speaks with: Peter. "Where do your affections lie, Peter?" Jesus asks, "Do you love me?" Peter, knowing his own limitations, confessed a somewhat weaker love. Still the command came: "Feed my lambs; tend my sheep; feed my sheep." You can lead people on a fishing expedition. Now lead them to Christ! That is the call to us as well.

Peter would one day be led away to be crucified, hands outstretched. Jesus let Peter know he would be an old man when that happened. There was work to be done in the meanwhile. We have been given the opportunity to serve Christ here on earth. It is a rich and joyful privilege. What are we doing with the time we have been given?

Peter, aware of his own failure in denying Christ look to John, as much as to say, "Isn't there somebody else more qualified for this task? Couldn't John do it better?" Jesus says, "Don't worry about what others are doing – you just do what you have been given to do."

Jesus' answer is most instructive. First, we are discouraged from idle speculation. We often apply teaching and instruction to others, but not to ourselves. This is idle speculation. When we apply scripture to others without applying it to ourselves we miss the point. When we go beyond what the scriptures say we are also engaging in speculation.

Second, we are discouraged from an unhealthy view of future things. We are to watch and wait, ready for His return at any moment. We are to occupy until He returns, redeeming the time. The unhealthy approach is to kick back and snooze until Jesus comes for us. We are not to be looking at particular people as signs of His return. We will all know when Jesus comes back for us!

Third, Jesus lays down the agenda for today: "You follow me." The command comes to each of us individually. Maybe there are Christians around you who are kicking back. That doesn't change your marching orders. Jesus didn't just kick back and wait to be crucified. Jesus didn't let His background as a carpenter govern His life – He did what God called him to do – not that which His background prepared Him for. So we need to be following Jesus, busy about our Father's work!

John's testimony is true, but not comprehensive. In reading and comparing the gospels we must remember that there was a vast amount of material available. Supposed contradictions between the gospels can usually be refuted this way. There are no real contradictions in scripture! Rather, they are all profitable for doctrine, reproof and instruction in righteousness. So let's get busy following Jesus and stop speculating!

P.S. Recordings of these studies in John and copies of these notes are now available on a new website at <http://www.jstoker.name>. A new podcast is also available there or at <http://feeds.feedburner.com/CCF-T-Podcast>.