

## Lesson 61

### The Next 40 days after Jesus' Resurrection on 18 Nisan (4/7/30 AD)

In the last lesson we saw the appearances of Christ to His disciples after His previous appearance to the two groups of women who went to the tomb. First, He had appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus where, incognito, He accompanied them for a couple of hours and explained how all the Old Testament scriptures had pointed at Him and the Cross. As soon as He then allowed them to recognize Him, He disappeared. Next, we saw how those two disciples had hurried back to Jerusalem to find the Eleven gathered in an upper room with some others. They described what they had seen and heard from Jesus. In turn, they were told that Peter had also just seen the risen Lord. After these accounts had been related some of those present had left. Those who departed included Thomas. Suddenly Jesus appeared in their midst and talked to them. Next we saw that, when Thomas had heard about the appearance of Jesus in the midst of the other disciples, he refused to believe it. All the disciples then left Jerusalem and went to Galilee as Jesus had told them. Eight days later, while the eleven were inside a house in Galilee with Thomas, possibly in Peter's house in Capernaum, the Lord appeared in their midst again.

We now take up the story as related in the Gospel of John.

**John 21:1a** **Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias.<sup>1</sup>**

This was clearly after Jesus had already appeared to Thomas in the house in Galilee. Obviously, this was in Capernaum where the boats of Peter and Andrew, and James and John were kept.

**John 21:1a-2** **It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas<sup>2</sup> (called Didymus),<sup>3</sup> Nathanael from**

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<sup>1</sup> The "Sea of Tiberius" was also known as the "Sea of Galilee" in Matthew and Mark and "Lake Gennesaret" in Luke. John identified this "Sea of Tiberius" as the "Sea of Galilee" in John 6:1. Perhaps this change in designation by John was meant to show that they were on "the Sea" close to the city of Tiberius which was about six miles SSW by boat from Capernaum where they had almost certainly started out in the boat that belonged to Peter.

<sup>2</sup> In the Greek text this is written Θωμᾶς {tho-mas'}. This is from the Aramaic name תאומי {taw-ome'} which means "twin." John then gives the Greek name Δίδυμος {did'-oo-mos} which also means "twin." This suggests that Thomas was known by the name "Didymus" among the Greek speaking community. This suggests that his identity as a twin was more important than the name by which his parents called him.

<sup>3</sup> From the circumstance that in the lists of the apostles Thomas (Didymus) is always mentioned in scripture along with Matthew, who was the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18), and that these two are always followed by James, who was also the son of Alphaeus, it has been supposed that all three, Matthew, Thomas, and James, were brothers. We know that Matthew was a tax collector, so it is reasonable to suppose that Thomas and James were as well. They probably made up the

## **Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together.**

John's mention of himself and James as the "sons of Zebedee" here is as close as he gets to naming either himself or his brother in his Gospel. Besides Thomas, all the others named were fishermen. The two unnamed were most likely Andrew the brother of Peter and Philip who was a close friend of Nathanael. They were both fishermen. Interestingly, except for Thomas, that would have meant that the group was made up of the Jesus' first six disciples. They were those who had accompanied Him from their first meeting at the sea of Galilee to the wedding at Cana. I can't help thinking that Thomas was included to reassure him that, like Peter, his initial failure hadn't disqualified him for great service.

Those who were absent included Matthew and his brother James, two of the sons of Alphaeus. They were not fishermen. Among those absent were Judas, son of James <sup>4</sup> and Simon the Zealot. Matthew doesn't include this event in his Gospel which gives further backing to the view that he wasn't one of the two unnamed participants.

**John 21:3 "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.**

As we see, this took place at night. Evidently, the best fishing with nets took place at night, but that night they didn't catch a single fish. This episode should be ringing a few bells of recognition. About two years before, Peter and Andrew, and James and John came back to Capernaum after a long winter with Jesus in Judea. Their very first night back they took both of their boats and went fishing. They were still gone in the early morning when Jesus went out to preach to the people. Jesus had then come upon them washing their nets on the beach after a long night of their futility. First, He had used Peter's boat as a preaching platform. Then, He had told Peter to cast out from shore and lower the nets. The enormous catch which they hauled in nearly swamped the boat of Peter and Andrew and the boat of James and John which had been called alongside to help. Peter had immediately understood his folly of putting fishing above hearing the Word of God. He confessed "'Depart from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'" The Lord had said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

**John 21:4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.**

Just as before, they had endured a night of futile fishing. As they approached closer to shore, probably to beach their boats, they could see the figure of Jesus but didn't recognize Him.

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*plural "tax collectors" that the Pharisees complained about in Matthew 9:11. We aren't told with which of his other brothers that Thomas was a twin, but I would hazard a guess that it was Matthew, who wrote the first Gospel.*

<sup>4</sup> *"Judas son of James" is also called "Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus" in Matthew 10:3, and just "Thaddeus" in Mark 3:18.*

Besides being too far away to recognize Him, evidently the same phenomenon was in play as had happened to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were kept from recognizing His face.

**John 21:5 So Jesus said to them, “Children, you do not have any fish, do you?” They answered Him, “No.” NAS**

The unusual address of “children” should have given them their first clue. The construction of Jesus’ question in the Greek implied that the speaker already knew that they hadn’t caught any fish. That should have been their second clue.

**John 21:6 He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.**

This time Jesus even told them on which side of the boat to cast their net. The catch this time was immediately so great that they couldn’t even haul it into the boat.

**John 21:7a Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!”**

It is not strange that John, who was one of those four involved two years before, was the first to connect the dots and understood that it was Jesus on the shore. Nor is it strange that Peter, ever the enthusiast, reacted with characteristic emotion.

**John 21:7b As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.**

Evidently, while fishing, they had stripped down to their loin cloths. Peter had the decency to put on his robe, but he couldn’t wait until the boat reached shore. He jumped into the water. Peter took off swimming fully clothed. This was characteristic of Peter. He was the one who had jumped into the lake to walk on water when he had seen Jesus walking to them on water one year before. He was the one who had proclaimed a few days before that even if everyone else denied Jesus, he never would. He was the one who had struck off the ear of the High Priest’s servant. He was full of enthusiastic emotion, but he tended to be short of thought or perseverance.

**John 21:8 The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.<sup>5</sup>**

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<sup>5</sup> *The Greek text says, “two hundred cubits.” A cubit is the length of a forearm, or about half a yard, so a “hundred yards” is a good approximation.*

After Peter jumped in, the rest of the disciples immediately started rowing into shore bringing the net in the water with them, with the fish still in it. It doesn't say that Peter beat them to shore. I like to think they passed him by.

**John 21:9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.**

Somehow, there was already a fire of coals burning with fish roasting on it, with bread as well.

**John 21:10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."**

Jesus invited them to bring some of the fish.

**John 21:11 Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.**

I like to think that it was about this time that at last Peter arrived. He climbed aboard. Jesus had asked to bring "some of the fish." Peter prepared to bring them all. All by himself, he dragged the weighty net ashore. By doing what he did, Peter was again trying to demonstrate that he loved the Lord more than the rest. There were 153 large fish. I don't know what they considered a large fish, but if you suppose they were at least ten pounds apiece, that meant that there was about three quarters of a ton of fish. It was a miracle that the net hadn't broken. It was a miracle that Peter was able to haul it ashore by himself.

John gave us the specific number of fish, 153. He didn't give us the approximate, number. The question has been asked by Bible scholars whether this is significant. Some numbers in scripture are readily significant like three, seven, twelve, and forty. They are repeated many times. This is the only time the number 153 appears in scripture. Certainly, the fish could be taken to represent those who would believe.<sup>6</sup> On that earlier occasion Jesus had told Peter: "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." Some have suggested that the specific number 153 is speaking of the fact that God knows the specific number of all who will be saved and when that number will be filled up (Romans 11:25).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *In the ancient world when Christianity was being persecuted a secret symbol for Christianity was the sign of the fish. This is thought to be because one of the Greek words for fish was ἰχθύς {ēkh-thü's}. Each letter in that word were each supposed to represent a word, thusly:*

*ι (iota) stood for Ἰησοῦς {ē-ā-sü's} or "Jesus."*

*χ (chi) stood for Χριστός {khrē-sto's} or "Christ."*

*θ (theta) stood for θεῶν {the-ō} or "of God."*

*ύ (upsilon) stood for υἱός {hwē-o's} or "son."*

*ς / σ (sigma) stood for σωτήρ {sō-tā'r} or "savior."*

*Thus the word ἰχθύς stood for "Jesus Christ, of God the Son, Savior." The sign can still be seen today to signify Christian faith.*

**John 21:12 Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.**

We aren't told why they didn't dare to ask Him who He was on this occasion. They did recognize Him on some of the other occasions when He appeared after His resurrection. Perhaps the lesson was to demonstrate that it isn't important what Jesus looked like. Some Christian communities have portrayed Jesus as blonde and white. Others portray Him as black. Some portray Him as oriental or brown. What is really important is who He is and what He did. In Revelation 1:14-15 John saw Him in a vision and described what he saw like this: “His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.”

**John 21:13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.**

This was the same food with which Jesus had fed the five thousand and the four thousand. In communion the bread always stands for His body. The eating of the bread symbolizes the fact that, when we believe in Him, His righteous life is credited to us.

The sign of the fish is important to the life of Christ. The fish is connected to Jesus as the sign of His resurrection by the following passage:

Matthew 12:38-40 “Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, ‘Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.’ He answered, ‘A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish,<sup>8</sup> so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’” (See also Luke 11:29, and Matthew 16:4).

The eating of the fish symbolized the fact that our sins are covered by His death on the cross. Because of our “eating” the bread and the fish by faith, we will also share in the resurrection of Jesus.

**John 21:14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.**

Here, John was speaking of “his disciples” as the group of which he was part. These were the appearances he had personally witnessed. As recorded in scripture this was at least the seventh time Jesus had appeared. The first time was to Mary Magdalene. The second time was to the

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<sup>7</sup> *Romans 11:25 “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.”*

<sup>8</sup> *Jonah 1:17*

other women who had gone to the tomb. The third time was to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The fourth time was to Peter alone. The fifth time was in the upper room in Jerusalem (the first time for John). The sixth time was in a house in Galilee (the second time for John). That made this the seventh time recorded, but the third time Jesus was seen by John along with most of the other eleven. This was at least the ninth day since His resurrection. I must believe that during those nine days Jesus appeared to many others who had believed in Him. These might have included the Samaritan woman at the well, the Phoenician woman whose daughter was healed, and the Gentile man who had the legion of demons cast out of him.

**John 21:15a When they had finished eating,**

Verse twenty indicates that for this conversation, Jesus had taken Peter and John aside after breakfast and walked down the beach. I think the Lord might have invited John along to be able to listen to and to record His conversation with Peter for posterity.

**John 21:15b Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love (ἀγαπάω) me more than these?”**

I think Jesus was addressing a problem that Peter had. He had just made that clear by throwing himself into the water fully clothed and trying to swim ashore before the other disciples could get there. Jesus knew that in his heart Peter thought his love for Him was greater than the “these” who were the other disciples they had just left behind at the fire on the beach.<sup>9</sup> He had to take Peter aside to address this because otherwise this revelation of Peter’s attitude would have caused resentment in the other disciples. Peter was always trying to show that he appreciated Jesus more than the other disciples. He was the one who had tried to walk to Jesus on the water. He was the one who had boasted that even if all the others denied Jesus, he, Peter would remain faithful.

Peter did have a great love for the Lord. His problem was that it wasn’t a mature love. There are two types of love in this passage. The first word which is translated by the NIV as “truly love” is ἀγαπάω {ä-gä-pä'-ō}. This kind of love involves more than emotion. This kind of love involves a deep commitment of the mind and soul. Emotion can be involved, but this kind of love is anchored in a way of thinking. Jesus asked Peter if he had this kind of love.

**John 21:15c “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love (φιλέω) you.”**

Peter really didn’t answer the Lord’s question about whether he thought his love was greater than that of the other disciples. He probably recognized that would sound like an arrogant statement. He did protest that the Lord must know that Peter loved Him. The word for love that

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<sup>9</sup> Peter wouldn’t have thought to accuse John of having a lesser love. This would have been because of their joint experience at the High Priest’s house. John had accompanied Jesus through all His trials, and Peter had denied and ultimately deserted Him.

Peter used here was the Greek word φιλέω {fē-le'-ō}. Phileo isn't a deep love founded on a commitment of soul. It is love which is more emotional. It can be eroded by contrary events. It isn't a mature love. The fact was the Peter didn't yet have this kind of love. He didn't then even realize the difference. It is worth noticing that much later when he wrote his two epistles, he never used the word (φιλέω) phileo to describe Christian love. He always used the word (ἀγαπάω) agapao.

**John 21:15d Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”**

There are two words used in this passage that are similar. The first word is the Greek ἀρνίον {är-nē'-on} <sup>10</sup> which is translated “lambs.” It is the word used here. The second word is the Greek πρόβατον {pro'-bä-ton} which means “sheep.” The other 30 times ἀρνίον {är-nē'-on} is used in the New Testament, it is used as part of the phrase “the Lamb of God.”<sup>11</sup> “The Lamb of God” is Jesus Christ.

I think Jesus' use of the word “lamb” here was meant to emphasize the fact that all believers are identified with Him. They are equally precious to Him. I believe that Jesus was telling Peter that the best way he could demonstrate his love was to serve the Church by feeding them with the Word of God. The Greek word here is βόσκω {bo'-skō} which is correctly translated “feed.” As Jeremiah said of this kind of feeding:

Jeremiah 15:16 “When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.”

**John 21:16a Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love (ἀγαπάω) me?”**

Peter hadn't seemed to have understood that what Jesus wanted from him wasn't the emotional overt kind of phileo love with which Peter always seemed to try to impress Jesus. Jesus wanted the deep (ἀγαπάω) agapao love. Here the NIV again used “truly love” to translate ἀγαπάω {ä-gä-pä'-ō}.

**John 21:16b He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I (φιλέω) love you.”**

Peter still didn't get the point. Again he used φιλέω {fē-le'-ō} to describe his love.

**John 21:16c Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”**

Jesus told Peter that if he truly loved Him, he could demonstrate it by taking care of His sheep. The Greek word for sheep here is πρόβατον {pro'-bä-ton}. That word is used in the New

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<sup>10</sup> The Greek has two words for “lamb.” The first is ἀρνίον {är-nē'-on}. The second is the related word ἀμνός {äm-no's}.

<sup>11</sup> With the exception of Revelation 13:11 where it is used to speak of a false Messiah or lamb.

Testament to describe sheep in herds which need tending and protecting from predators. The word for “take care” is ποιμαίνω {poi-mī'-nō}. It is derived from the root word ποιμήν {poi-mā'n} which means “shepherd.” The duties of a shepherd involve finding pasture, guiding, cherishing, and protecting.

**John 21:17a The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love (φιλέω) me?”**

This time Jesus addressed Peter at the level of maturity where he was. Peter’s love as yet was only φιλέω {fē-le'-ō}

**John 21:17b Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love (φιλέω) me?”**

Peter didn’t seem to understand that this was the first time Jesus had asked using the word φιλέω {fē-le'-ō}.

**John 21:17c He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love (φιλέω) you.”**

Of course Jesus knew. The problem wasn’t that Jesus didn’t know that Peter loved Him. The problem was that Peter’s love wasn’t yet mature. That was why he could launch himself out of a boat to walk toward Jesus on the water, and after a few steps lose his faith and sink into the depths. That was why he could seemingly fearlessly draw his sword and attack Malthus in the garden in front of dozens of armed men, and yet a few hours later deny Christ three times. That last time it was in the presence of the Lord Himself while He was being beaten and abused by the High Priest’s servants.

**John 21:17d Jesus said, “Feed (βόσκω) my sheep ( πρόβατον).**

Jesus was telling Peter that the best way he could demonstrate his love for Jesus was to teach His flock. This was another way of repeating what He had told the disciples at the Last Supper:

John 13:34b-35 “Love (ἀγαπάω) one another. As I have loved (ἀγαπάω) you, so you must love (ἀγαπάω) one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love (ἀγαπάω) one another.”

**John 21:18-19a I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.**

According to the testimony of Clement of Rome in his letter to the Corinthians (circa 90 AD), Peter was martyred in Rome. As Clement witnessed this with his own eyes, there is no reason to doubt this account. The description of Peter having his hands stretched out may have described the position of his hands in crucifixion. He seems to have been crucified not long after Paul was

beheaded.<sup>12</sup> Both executions seem to have taken place during Nero's last year when he was also killing all those Romans of influence that he thought might oppose him. The executions of Paul and Peter took place in 67 AD against the backdrop of the Jewish rebellion in Judea and Galilee which had begun in 66 AD. The Acts of Peter, the apocryphal book written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD, holds that Peter requested to be crucified upside down because he didn't feel worthy to die in the same way as the Lord.<sup>13</sup> This may or may not be true.

**John 21:19b Then he said to him, "Follow me!"**

Having shown Peter the great catch of fish, and then having told Peter that he would die on the cross, he told him "Follow me!" I can't help connecting this to the two other times Jesus had given this command to Peter. The first time was when they had also gone out fishing at night and been shown a miraculous catch of fish. Then Jesus had said to Peter: Matthew 4:19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." The second time was after Peter had confessed that Jesus was the Christ. Then Jesus had said to Peter: Matthew 8:34b "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

**John 21:20 Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?")**

This is the verse that indicated that Jesus had taken Peter apart from the others and was walking him down the beach so he would be separated from the other disciples when Jesus asked him if Peter thought he loved Jesus more than the others.

We aren't told why John was allowed to tag along behind them. We do know that John usually sought to be right at the Lord's side as at the Last Supper and even at the foot of the Cross. Besides that, John and Peter were always a pair. Besides that, John was probably the only one to whom Peter couldn't feel superior. Although both of them had gone to the High Priest's house after Jesus' arrest, John had followed Jesus all the way to the end, while Peter had denied Him three times.

During the first years of the church as recorded in Acts, John always seemed to have accompanied Peter, although Peter always seemed to have done the talking. John was always in the background overshadowed by Peter. Finally, when John was past ninety and long after Peter was dead, John came to foreground. He wrote the Gospel of John, Revelation, and 1<sup>st</sup> John, three of the greatest books in the Bible.<sup>14</sup> John wrote 19% of the New Testament. Peter wrote 2%. I like to think that John's life teaches us that just because we are old, it doesn't mean that our best years of service are behind us. If we walk in the LORD they can be ahead of us.

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<sup>12</sup> Paul was a Roman citizens and it was against Roman law to crucify a Roman citizen.

<sup>13</sup> If so, it would seem that Peter never got over the temptation of making a grand gesture.

<sup>14</sup> He also wrote the short letters of 2<sup>nd</sup> John, and 3<sup>rd</sup> John.

**John 21:21** When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

Obviously, John was close enough to hear the conversation. Peter still hadn’t absorbed the lesson of humility. He seemed to have been worried how he would stack up with John. Later, in the Epistle to the Romans, Paul summed up the relevant principal nicely:

Romans 14:4 “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls.”

**John 21:22** Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”

Jesus basically told Peter that his only concern was to be to “follow me!” John’s life and his death was John’s concern, not Peter’s.

**John 21:23** Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

This tells us that John was very old by the time he wrote this down. He was probably well over ninety years old. He was the last of the twelve disciples left alive and he was so old for that time that people had started to misinterpret what Jesus had said. They had begun to think that it meant that John wouldn’t die before Christ returned. John used this occasion to set the record straight.

**John 21:24** This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

This is the closest that John came to identifying himself as the writer of this Gospel. He witnessed the events himself and wrote them down himself.

### *Jesus’ Appearance at the Mountain in Galilee*

Evidently after this appearance to the disciples (John 21:4), Jesus told His disciples to meet Him at a certain mountain in Galilee. Matthew recorded part of that story:

**Matthew 28:16** Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

It seems that word of what Jesus had said spread among the other disciples in Galilee, and they also assembled at the mountain. I believe that this is what Paul recorded in 1 Corinthians when he said that more than five hundred saw Him at once. Paul reported:

<sup>1</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:3-6** **For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised ~~on~~ since the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.<sup>15</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living,<sup>16</sup> though some have fallen asleep.**

### *Other Appearances of Christ Including His Ascension*

In Luke's Book of Acts, he took up the story where he had ended in his Gospel:

**Acts 1:1-2** **In my ~~former~~ first book,<sup>17</sup> Theophilus,<sup>18</sup> I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions to the apostles he had chosen ~~through~~ because of<sup>19</sup> the Holy Spirit. RST**

This says that the first part of the Acts account was to describe the time up to Jesus' ascension. This also seems to indicate that Jesus gave personal instructions during that time to the Eleven apostles He had chosen.

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<sup>15</sup> The term "the Twelve" was used collectively of the group of twelve that Jesus had chosen on the mountain. They were still referred to by that title, even when not all twelve were present, but only some of them. We know, of course, that at that meeting (Luke 24:36, Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:14), neither Judas Iscariot (who was dead), nor Thomas (who was absent – John 20:24) were there.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Corinthians was written in 57 AD, 27 years after this appearance of the resurrected Jesus.

<sup>17</sup> Luke was referring here to what we call "the Gospel of Luke" The word translated "former" here is *πρῶτος* {prō'-tos} which actually should be translated "first." The word for "former" is *πρῶτερος* {prō'-teros} which is not here. The correct translation "first" could be taken to indicate that Luke was contemplating a third book to complete the history. Of course, God in his providence, knew Luke had written all he needed to write. The life of Paul after Acts can be reconstructed from his letters written after his first Roman imprisonment which ends the narrative in Acts. Those Pauline letters are Hebrews, 2 Corinthians, 1 Timothy, Titus and 2 Timothy.

<sup>18</sup> In Greek Theophilus means "Lover of God." Theophilus was also the person to whom Luke wrote his Gospel (Luke 1:3). Whether this was an actual person or meant to speak of the type of person to whom Luke was writing is irrelevant to the understanding of the writings of Luke.

<sup>19</sup> The Greek word here is *διὰ* {dē-ä'} which can be more intelligibly translated "because of," since that translation precisely reflects what is recorded in the last chapter of Luke (Luke 24:49) and in verse 4 here. Jesus gave them a command to stay in Jerusalem "because of" the gift of the Holy Spirit that was to be given. It is clear that Jesus Himself gave the command, not the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 1:3a After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.**

Although this communication seems to have been focused toward the eleven men who were to lead the Church, we know that on the journey back to Jerusalem and included in the command to stay there were about 120 believers who were both men and women.

**Acts 1:3b He appeared to them over a period of forty days <sup>20</sup> and spoke about the kingdom of God.**

Jesus didn't appear to those eleven every day, but a number of times over the period between His resurrection and His ascension. Since according to the Law, Pentecost was to occur on the fiftieth day after the first weekly Sabbath after Passover, and Jesus was resurrected on the first day, that means that since he appeared for forty days, He ascended ten days before Pentecost which was the twenty-seventh day of the second month that year, which was 30 AD.

**Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, you heard from me: ASV**

We aren't told what occasion this was. However, this must have been after they were headed back to Jerusalem from Galilee. It wouldn't have made sense before they had left Jerusalem for Galilee. We aren't told when Jesus told the disciples that they were going back to Jerusalem, but I expect it was just before they left. He evidently took only about 120 with Him (Acts 1:15).

**Acts 1:5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."**

This was to fulfill the prophecy of John the Baptist:

Luke 3:16 "John answered them all, 'I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'"<sup>21</sup>

**Acts 1:6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"**

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<sup>20</sup> *Forty is a significant number in the Bible. Among the many instances: Israel wandered for 40 years in the desert, Moses and Elijah were on Mt. Sinai for 40 days. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days. It also rained 40 days and nights in Noah's flood.*

<sup>21</sup> *The baptism with fire will not take place until Jesus' Second Advent at the end of the Great Tribulation.*

This was a subsequent meeting with His disciples, including the Eleven. We know that it was just outside of Jerusalem, on the Mt. of Olives. At that time there had been enough time for them to have thought over what Jesus had said. They asked Him if the giving of the Holy Spirit meant He would also return with “fire” as John the Baptist had prophesied. “Fire” meant the restoration of the Kingdom.

**Acts 1:7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.**

Jesus told them that it wasn’t for them to know when the kingdom would be restored. This helps establish this principal: It shouldn’t make any difference to our outlook or way of living whether Jesus returns tomorrow or in a thousand years. We should live each moment occupied with the LORD.

This verse also tells something to us about the change in powers Jesus had at His disposal after His resurrection. Before His death and resurrection Jesus’ earthly existence didn’t operate with the help of Divine omniscience. We know this because before His death He said that even He didn’t know when the kingdom would be restored:

Matthew 24:36 “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

In Acts 1:7, after His death and resurrection, Jesus didn’t say that **He** didn’t know. He only said that it wasn’t given to them to know. This implies that the full powers of His deity had been restored to Himself. When He had been tasked with living a righteous and sinless life before the Father, He had to do it as the Second Adam, without omniscience, omnipotence, or omnipresence. He had to do it by simply relying in faith on the Father to provide the information or the power.

**Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

Here Jesus was predicting the gift of the Holy Spirit and its accompanying spiritual gifts which would mark the beginning of the Church Age at the upcoming Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem.

The verses below from the Gospel of Luke, Mark, and Acts are the only accounts of Jesus’ ascension.

**Luke 24:50 When he had led them out (*forth*) to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them.**

The question we might ask here is: Where did He lead them forth from? Since we know that they had spent most of the previous forty days in Galilee, it was from Galilee that He had led

them forth to Bethany on the eastern slope of the Mt. of Olives. This implies that Jesus had walked the road with them for much of the way. This seems to have been the “subsequent meeting” referred to in Acts 1:6. Another question we might ask is: Who were the people that made up this group walking back from Galilee toward Bethany outside of Jerusalem. Acts gives us the answer:

Acts 1:12-15 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in (*to Jerusalem*), they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.<sup>22</sup> These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty). KJV

You will note that this wasn't close to all the believers in Judea and Galilee. At least 500 had seen Jesus raised (1 Corinthians 15:6) and even that was not all the believers. However, these were the 120 that Jesus had picked (both men and women) to inaugurate the Church Age. They were also to begin the evangelization of the world, starting from Jerusalem.

**Luke 24:51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.**

**Mark 16:19 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.<sup>23</sup>**

**Acts 1:9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.**

This marked Jesus' ascension to Heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father. Peter later testified about what he had seen as recorded in both Acts and 1 Peter:

Acts 2:32-35 “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *I believe this is saying they returned from Galilee to the same room in Jerusalem where they had been staying when Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection. It was probably the same room where they had observed the Last Supper. We know that the eleven and some others had been staying there during the three-day interim before Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. This tells us that it seems to have been a large enough to crowd in 120 disciples.*

<sup>23</sup> *Although the Gospel of Mark didn't record the trip to Galilee here, he had recorded Jesus' intention to go to Galilee in Mark 14:28.*

1 Peter 3:21b-22 “Jesus Christ -- has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

**Acts 1:10** **They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.**

By their sudden appearance and dress we know that these two “men” were angels. This provokes in me the thought that these two angels, and the two angels reported at the tomb in Luke 24:2-4 and John 20:10-13 may be associated with the two angels represented in gold on the Ark of the Covenant.<sup>25</sup>

**Acts 1:11** **“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”**

What does this mean when it says Jesus would come back in the same way? I think it refers to this: Jesus ascended from just outside of Bethany from the Mt. of Olives where He was first given a welcome into Jerusalem as King. He will return to the very same spot on His return to begin His 1,000-year reign:

Zechariah 14:3-4 “Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.”

**Acts 1:12-13** **Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city.<sup>26</sup> When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying.**

**Luke 24:52** **Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.**

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<sup>24</sup> *Psalms 110:1*

<sup>25</sup> *Exodus 25:18-20* “And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends. The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover.”

<sup>26</sup> *A Sabbath day’s journey was about a thousand yards or six tenths of a mile. This is according to the Jewish traditions in the Mishnah and the Talmud. It is not in the Torah, or written Word of God.*

After this they returned to Jerusalem after an absence of almost forty days to sleep and eat and pray in the upper room.

**Luke 24:53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.**

In the meantime, during the day they would go to the Temple and praise God before the people for what He had done. Evidently, the Jewish leaders didn't quite know what to make of them. They seem not to have taken them seriously, and they didn't take any action against them.

### *The Two Endings of John*

The ends of Chapter 20 and Chapter 21 almost amount to two endings of the Gospel of John. If Chapter 21 had never been written, it would seem like the ending had already been written. It is almost like John finished Chapter 20 and thought he was through and then went on to write Chapter 21 and then put a separate ending on it.

### *The End of John 21*

**John 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.**

John was very aware that what He had written in his Gospel had left out many events and had compressed the speeches he had heard and the history he had witnessed. However, he was reconciled to it. At his great age, he had come to hear the testimony of many others of how Jesus had impacted their lives during His ministry on earth. The story of the ripples that have spread from there through the lives of hundreds of millions of others who came afterward continues to be written today and will continue forever. John knew that what he had written was all that needed to be written because the Holy Spirit had inspired it just like the writings of the Old Testament prophets.

### *The Other End in Chapter 20*

**John 20:30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.**

Like the end of Chapter 21 John confessed that his Gospel wasn't nearly a full account of all that happened.

**John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

But what had been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was enough to show the way to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

### *The End of Mark*

In Lesson 60 we already covered the question about the validity of the last verses of Mark. I concluded that they certainly belonged as inspired scripture. The last verses of Mark (verses 17 through 20) gave a general description of the miracles and ministry that had happened in the Church.

**Mark 16:17** **And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my (*Jesus*) name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues;**

You will notice that this says “new tongues,” not “unknown tongues.” This is not talking about the relatively rare gift of speaking God’s truth in a language (tongue) which is unknown to the speaker, but of the fact that the Gospel would spread to every nation and tongue (language):

Revelation 5:9 “And they sang a new song: ‘You (*Jesus*) are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

**Mark 16:18a** **they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all;**

Acts recorded Paul being bit by a deadly snake that he had picked up by mistake on Malta (Acts 28:3-6) without any effects. It should be noted that history records that there were two favored means of covert assassination in the Roman world. The first was by means of poisoning food. The second was by means of secreting poisonous snakes in the personal effects of one’s enemy. This was just saying that no harm could come to them without God’s assent.<sup>27</sup>

**Mark 16:18b** **they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”**

Acts recorded many miracles of healing. There are still miracles of healing going on. I have seen them.

**Mark 16:20** **Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.**

Mark was one of those who preached everywhere. We know he was with Paul and his uncle Barnabas in Cyprus. Later he was with Paul in Rome. Then he was with Peter in Babylon and

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<sup>27</sup> *This isn’t an invitation to purposely handle poisonous snakes or drink poison.*

finally in the Roman Province of Asia. He had personally seen all the signs he had mentioned in these verses.