

# Jesus' Appearance to Seven Disciples by the Sea of Galilee John 21:1-24

by R.A. Torrey

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*Jesus appears to the disciples in Galilee, shows His interest in their daily work and needs, and provides them with a miraculous catch of fish, while also testing the reality of their professed love and giving them opportunities to reaffirm that love and demonstrate it by service, following, and death.*

**Scripture:** John 21:1

**Topics:** "Discipleship", "Restoration"

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## Description

R.A. Torrey explores Jesus' third appearance to His disciples at the Sea of Galilee, emphasizing the significance of their labor and the miraculous catch of fish that symbolizes divine provision and guidance. The sermon highlights Peter's restoration through a threefold affirmation of love for Christ, illustrating the importance of love and service in the life of a disciple. Torrey also discusses the personal relationship between Jesus and His followers, showing how Jesus meets them in their everyday work and failures, and calls them to a deeper commitment. The narrative culminates in Jesus' command to Peter to 'follow me,' underscoring the call to discipleship and the cost associated with it. Ultimately, the sermon reflects on the nature of Christ's love and the responsibilities of His followers.

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## Transcript

### DISCOVERY OF THE FACTS

1. The Third Appearance of Jesus to the Disciples After His Resurrection, vv. 1-14 What is the relation of c. 21 to the rest of the book? (See 20:30, 31.) By whom was it written? What are the "these things" mentioned in v. 1? How did the disciples come to be in Galilee? (Matt. 26:32; 28:7; Mark 16:7.) How many disciples were present at this appearance of our Lord? Who were they? Where had all but one of them been mentioned together first? (John 1:40-51.) Why had they Thomas with them now?

Why are Peter and Thomas mentioned first? How often has Nathaniel been mentioned since the first chapter? Does it follow that he was not of much account? How is John mentioned? Why is he not mentioned by name? Who was the leader in the company? What proposition did he make? What was Peter's reason for going fishing? (Acts 18:3; 20:34.) Was this a return to his old trade because he despaired of the high hopes for which he had left it? What is the best way to await great events?

Was it pleasing to Christ for him and the rest to go fishing? Are there other instances in which God granted special revelations to those who were at the post of secular duty? (Luke 2:8; Matt. 4:18-20, 21.) What luck did they have? Did that remind them of anything in the past? (Luke 5:5.) Who came to their help? When did He come? When we have toiled long and wearily and fruitlessly, of what may we be sure? Where was Jesus standing? Where were the disciples? Of what may we see a picture or type in Jesus standing on the shore, waiting for His weary disciples out on the sea to bring their fish ashore?

Did the disciples recognize Jesus? Why not? (v. 12; John 20:14; Mark 16:12; Luke 24:15, 16, 31.) If some one had been making up a story of the appearance of Jesus after His resurrection, would he have made it up that way? Does it ever happen today that the disciples of Jesus do not recognize Him when He comes to give them needed help? Before Jesus helped His disciples, what did He draw out of them? Is this His usual method of dealing with us? Why is it, then, that He does not help some of us?

How did He address them? What was His question? Is He interested today in the question whether our temporal needs are supplied? Is He interested in our success at our trade or in our business? What were the disciples obliged to answer? What were their prospects for a breakfast? Did they have enough for breakfast when the time came? Why? Will He do so today? (Heb. 13:8; Phil. 4:19; Heb. 13:5.) What did He bid them do? Will He tell us where and how to carry on our daily toil? Could Jesus have secured the fish for them without the trouble of casting their nets and pulling the fish ashore?

Why did not He? What did He say would be the result of doing as He bade them? What may we be confident will be the result of fishing the way He bids us? Do we always get the immediate results they did? Of what may we be sure? (Gal. 6:9.) How did they show their wisdom? What is the wisest thing any one can do when he has any command from the Lord? What was the result? Why did they get such a haul? Why is it we oftentimes fail to get such a haul? Of what was this haul of fishes a prophecy? (Acts 2:41; 4:4.)

Have we a right to symbolize these things in this way? (Luke 5:10.) Why did they get such a haul at Pentecost? (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 11.) What did one of the disciples at once recognize? Which disciple was it? Why was he the first to recognize that it was the Lord? Did he keep the glad discovery to himself? What did he have to do before Peter recognized this fact? What did Peter do? Why did he do that? (Song of Sol. 8:7 first half.) What two forms of love have we illustrated here?

Why was Peter drawn to Christ with such warmth of love? (Luke 7:47.) Did he get to the Lord much quicker by jumping over-board? Was it a very prudent act? Which is the more acceptable to Christ, the cool, calculating prudence that never does any foolish things because it is too cold to make any mistakes, or warm, uncalculating love that sometimes gets into the water in its eagerness to get to Him? What other scene in Peter's life does this suggest? (Matt. 14:28, 29.) When Peter the first time recognized the glory of the Lord in a miracle, what was his feeling? (Luke 5:8.)

Which sense of sin is more wholesome, that which makes us cry, "Depart from me," or that which draws us to Him? Where is the safest place for a forgiven sinner like Peter? Would it have done for all the disciples to have jumped overboard and swam ashore? How did Peter make up for leaving the rest to drag the net to shore (v. 11)? What did they find when they reached shore? Of what may we take that as a foreglimpse? (Heb. 4:9; Luke 12:37.) For whom had the fire and refreshment been prepared?

By whom? Does Jesus even now prepare refreshment for His weary disciples? What did He bid the disciples do? Could not He provide enough for their breakfast without their help? Why did He ask their

aid? How many fishes were there in the net? What remarkable fact is mentioned in connection with this? When will nets stand a great strain? Have we reason to fear that the implements we have at our disposal will not stand the strain of any blessing He is disposed to give? What did Jesus invite them to do?

Who waited on the table? Is there any such invitation awaiting us? (Luke 12:37.) Were the fish they had caught any sweeter received from His hand? Did the scene make any lasting impression on Peter's mind? (Acts 10:41.) 2. The Risen Jesus and the Penitent Peter, vv. 15-19 To whom did Jesus especially address Himself when breakfast was over? Why? By which name does He address Him? Why not "Peter"? What question did He put to him? What is meant by "more than these"? (Matt. 26:33, 35.)

What is Christ's first demand of all His disciples? Who is to be the supreme object of their love? (Matt. 10:37.) Has Christ a right to make such a demand? Has any other teacher? What was Peter's answer? Did Peter use the same word for "love" as Christ used? (See R. V., margin.) Why not? Did He say that he loved Him more than the rest did? Why does he say, "Thou knowest that I love Thee"? Does Jesus know we love Him? Which is the more important, that we should know we love Christ, or that Jesus should know it?

How is love to Christ to be shown? (John 14:21, 23.) How did Jesus show that He accepted this profession of love? How was the forgiveness and compassion of Jesus shown in this commission? What is the meaning of this commission? What second question did Jesus put? How did it differ from the first? What second commission did He give Him? How did it differ from the first? What third question did Jesus put? How did it differ from the other two? (R. V., margin.) What was the purpose of Jesus in this repeated questioning?

What was the effect upon Peter? Why? What did the threefold questioning suggest? What was Peter's reply? What was Christ's final commission to Peter? What future fact did Jesus reveal to Peter? Would such intelligence be gratifying, or otherwise? How was it fulfilled? How could God be glorified by death? Can He be glorified in any other way? (John 17:4.) What final charge did He give Peter? What does "follow me" mean? Is that charge to Peter alone? (Matt. 16:24.) Will the pathway be smooth if we follow Christ? (2 Tim. 3:12.)

What will be the final result? (John 12:26.) What indications have we of the deep impression which this conversation made on Peter's mind? (1 Peter 5:2-4; 2 Peter 1:14.) 3. "Lord, and What Shall This Man Do?" vv. 20-24 Who does Peter notice just at this point (v. 20)? How did he come to see John following? Why did he turn about? What question did Peter put to the Lord? What was his purpose in asking that question? (Compare v. 18.) What was Jesus' answer? What was the point of this answer?

Did Jesus ever answer questions of mere speculative curiosity? (Compare Luke 13:23-27.) To what coming did Jesus refer in the words, "Till I come" (v. 22)? How does this verse prove conclusively that Christ's coming does not refer to the death of the individual believer? What report went out among the brethren regarding John? Had Jesus said that he would not die? Who wrote this Gospel (v. 24)? Is the name given? CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHINGS

1. Jesus Christ Comes to His disciples when they are faithfully laboring at their every day work, 3, 4; comes to His disciples in the hour of their failure and discouragement, 3, 4; takes a deep interest in His disciples' need, 5; takes a deep interest in the success or failure of His disciples in their every day work, 5; draws out of His disciples a confession of the failure of their own unaided efforts before He offers His help, 5; teaches His disciples where and how to fish, 6; instructs His disciples how to perform their daily toil, 6;

promises success to those who obey His instructions, 6; He points out the fish, but requires His disciples to catch them, 6; transforms utter failure into marvelous success, 5, 6; gives the net strength to hold the blessing He Himself gives, 11; waits with refreshment on the shore for His disciples, as they toil wearily on the sea, 4, 9; compare Luke 12:37; provides for the physical needs of His disciples, and shows them a way to provide for their own, 5-13; spreads a feast for His disciples when their toil is over and they reach the land bringing their fish with them, 9; Himself waits upon the disciples, 13; compare Luke 12:37; demands the supreme love of His disciples, 15-17; compare Matt. 10:37; tests the reality of the professed love of His disciples, 15-17; gives the disciple who has most lamentably failed to demonstrate his professed love an opportunity to reaffirm that love, 15-17; accepts the humble reaffirmation of love on the part of the one who failed, and gives him opportunity to demonstrate it by service, following and death, 15-19; never answers questions of merely speculative curiosity but bids us see to it that we obey Him, 22; Christ's first and great question of His disciples: "Lovest thou Me?", 15-17; His commission to those who love Him: Feed my lambs, 15; tend my sheep, 16, R.

V.; feed my sheep, 17; follow Me, 19. 2. The Disciples Go to the place Jesus has appointed to meet them, 21; compare Matt. 28:7; wait for the expected meeting with the Lord by faithful attendance upon ordinary duties, 3; toil long and wearily and catch nothing, 3; see Jesus on the shore come to their help, 4; do not recognize that it is Jesus, 4; do just as Jesus bids them, 6; catch a great multitude of fishes, 6; hasten to Jesus, but do not leave their commonplace duty to get to Him, but carry their fish along, 8; find a feast after toil, 9; what they themselves have caught ministers to the feast, 10; are served by Jesus Himself, 13. 3.

Peter Leaves everything to hasten through the waters to the Lord, 7; obeys the bidding of his Lord, 10, 11; atones for leaving the others to pull the net to shore by pulling it to land alone, 11; is given an opportunity after his thrice repeated denial of his Lord to make a thrice repeated profession of his love, 15-17; professes his love in humble terms, 15-17, R. V., see margin; compare Matt. 26:33, 35; turns his thought from his own duty to ask questions about another, 20, 21.

The genuineness of his love: Christ knew it, 15-17; demonstrated by death, 18, 19. 4. John The object of Jesus' peculiar love, 7; keeps himself in the background, 2; puts the two greatest offenders in the foreground, 2; first to recognize the Lord, 7; at once communicates his glad discovery to another, 7.

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