

Olivet Baptist Church

3500 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21229

Wednesday Night Bible Study (7:00 pm)

Book of John – Facilitator: Rev. Alex O. Stone

Overall Theme: Jesus' Passion and Resurrection (18:1–20:31)

- I. The Empty Tomb (John 20:1-20:9)
- II. Christ Appears to Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-20:18)
- III. Christ Appears The Disciples (*Thomas Absent*) (John 20:19-20:25)
- IV. Christ Appears The Disciples (*Thomas Present*) (John 20:26-20:29)
- V. Purpose of John's Gospel (John 20:30-20:31)

THE EPILOGUE (CONCLUSION) JOHN 21:1–21:25

- VI. Christ Appears to the Seven Disciples (John 21:1-21:14)
- VII. Christ Speaks to Peter (John 21:15-21:23)
- VIII. The Conclusion of John's Gospel (John 21:24-21:25)

CHAPTER REVIEW:

- **Chapters 18-19** concentrate on the Arrest and Crucifixion
- **Chapters 13–17** concentrate on Jesus' instructions to the disciples in the Upper Room after washing their feet and predicted His betrayal. During the Passover celebration.
- **The disciples** two divine assignments: **spread the gospel** and **build the Church**.

CURRENT FOCUS: "JESUS RESURRECTION AND THE EPILOGUE" (20:1–21:25)

The Resurrection of Christ (*Matt. 28:1–8; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12*)

20 Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ² Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

³ Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. ⁴ So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. ⁵ And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying *there*; yet he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, ⁷ and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. ⁹ For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

Christ Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³ Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”

She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” ¹⁴ Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “**Rabboni!**” (which is to say, Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended

to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' " ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* He had spoken these things to her.

Christ Appears to the Disciples (*Thomas Absent*) Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36–43

¹⁹ Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace *be* with you." ²⁰ When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained." ²⁴ Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

So, he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Christ Appears to the Disciples (*Thomas Present*) 1 Cor. 15:5

²⁶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”

²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed.”

The Purpose of John’s Gospel

³⁰ And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Christ Appears to the Seven Disciples

21 After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed *Himself*: ² Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the *sons* of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.”

They said to him, “We are going with you also.” They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. ⁴ But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “Children, have you any food?” They answered Him, “No.”

⁶And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find *some*.” So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. ⁷Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on *his* outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. ⁸But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. ⁹Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.”

¹¹Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. ¹²Jesus said to them, “Come *and* eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?”—knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. ¹⁴This *is* now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

Christ Speaks to Peter

¹⁵So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, *son* of Jonah, *do you love Me more than these?*” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

¹⁶He said to him again *a second time*, “Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

¹⁷ He said to him *the third time*, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.

¹⁸ Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish.” ¹⁹ This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.” ²⁰ Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” ²¹ Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what *about* this man?”

²² Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me.” ²³ Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, “If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you?”

The Conclusion of John’s Gospel

²⁴ This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Commentary: THE RESURRECTION AND EPILOGUE (CHAP. 20:1-21:25)**F. The empty tomb (20:1–9)**

John's Gospel comes to a conclusion with a proclamation of Jesus' victory over death (chap. 20) followed by an epilogue (chap. 21). Each Gospel writer stressed certain aspects of the events. John began with a testimony of how he came to personal faith in the Resurrection by considering the evidence found in the open tomb.

John 20:1–2. The first day of the week, Sunday, **Mary of Magdala** and other women (cf. **we** in v. 2) came **to the tomb**. "Mary of Magdala" is a translation of the same Greek words which elsewhere are rendered "Mary Magdalene" (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1, 9; Luke 24:10). Her devotion to Jesus, living and dead, was based on her gratitude for His delivering her from bondage to Satan. She had been an observer at the cross and now was the first person at the grave. This tomb had been closed with a large rock door (Mark 16:3–4) and had been sealed by the authority of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate (Matt. 27:65–66). The women were amazed to see an open and apparently empty tomb. They ran and told **Peter and the beloved disciple** (cf. John 19:26) that a terrible thing had occurred. They assumed that grave robbers had desecrated the tomb.

John 20:3–9. **Peter and John** started a footrace to **the tomb**. John beat Peter to the garden and looked in **the tomb**. It was not quite empty for John saw the grave clothes. Perhaps his first thought was that the women had made a mistake! **He bent over and looked** (*blepei*) **in** but **did not** enter the tomb, probably for fear of

defilement. When **Peter ... arrived** he rushed in and **saw** (*theōrei*, “beheld attentively”) the grave clothes and the **separate** burial **cloth**. He must have remained inside puzzled at what he saw. After a period of time John **went** in and **saw** (*eiden*, “perceived”—the third Gr. word for “see” in these verses) the significance of the grave clothes **and believed**. Peter must have been thinking, “Why would a grave robber have left the clothes in this order? Why take the body of ¹ Jesus?” But John perceived that the missing body and the position of the grave clothes was not due to a robbery. He realized that Jesus had risen from the dead and had gone through the grave clothes. **The tomb was open not to let Jesus’ body out but to let the disciples and the world see that He rose.**

This section of John’s Gospel (20:1–9) is a powerful eyewitness testimony which strikes the perceptive reader as being psychologically and historically true. John commented (v. 9) that **even after a long period of teaching by Jesus the disciples still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead** (cf. Pss. 16:10–11; 110:1, 4; Isa. 53:11–12).

G. Jesus’ appearance to Mary (20:10–18).

John 20:10–14. Jesus’ first resurrection appearance was to **Mary** of Magdala, out of whom He had cast seven demons (Luke 8:2). (For a list of His resurrection appearances see Matt. 28.) **The disciples returned to their homes** while Mary remained **outside the tomb crying**. **John must not have yet told her that Jesus was**

¹ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 341–342). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

risen. He probably was too stunned and puzzled to say anything significant. Mary looked **into the tomb and saw two** individuals who were **angels**. In the Bible when angels appeared to people, the angels looked like men; they did not have halos or wings. In certain visions, winged beings appeared (e.g., Isa. 6) but the norm for angels was that they were in humanlike forms.

Because of her grief Mary did not notice anything unusual. Their question and her answer set the stage for the greatest “recognition scene” in all of history (perhaps the second greatest is “I am Joseph”; cf. Gen. 45:1–3). The appearance of **Jesus** to Mary was so unexpected that **she did not realize that it was Jesus**. The fact that He appeared to Mary rather than to Pilate or Caiaphas or to one of His disciples is significant. That a woman would be the first to see Him is an evidence of Jesus’ electing love as well as a mark of the narrative’s historicity. No Jewish author in the ancient world would have **2** invented a story with a woman as the first witness to this most important event. Furthermore, Jesus may have introduced Himself to Mary first because she had so earnestly sought Him. She was at the cross while He was dying (John 19:25), and she went to His tomb early on Sunday morning (20:1).

John 20:15–16. Mary talked with Jesus but still did not realize who He was. Some suggest that Jesus’ appearance was changed; others say she had a temporary “blindness” as did the Emmaus Road disciples who “were kept from recognizing

² Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 342). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Him” (Luke 24:16) until His act of disclosure. Others say that possibly the tears in her eyes kept her from recognizing Him.

Jesus said to her, Mary. As the Good Shepherd, He calls His sheep by name (cf. John 10:3) and “they know His voice” (10:4). Immediately she recognized Him! She responded with the cry **Rabboni! (which means my Teacher)**

John 20:17–18. She may have embraced Him physically, for the Lord responded, **Do not hold on to Me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to My brothers and tell them....** These words spoke of a new relationship, new relatives, and a new responsibility. Many wanted to “hold onto” Jesus. The KJV translation “Touch Me not,” has caused many interpreters to wonder why He could not be “touched.” The NIV translation is more accurate, for He certainly was not **untouchable** (cf. Matt. 28:9; John 20:27). Mary had lost Jesus once before (at His crucifixion) and it was natural to fear the loss of His presence again.

Jesus said, in effect, “This (the physical contact) is not My real presence for the church. A *new relationship* will begin with My Ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church.” Jesus then explained the fact of the *new relatives*. He called His disciples His brothers. Earlier He had said they were friends: “I no longer call you servants ... instead, I have called you friends” (15:15). Believers in Jesus become a part of Jesus’ family with God as their Father (cf. Heb. 2:11–12; Rom. 8:15–17, 29; Gal. 3:26). Mary’s *new responsibility* was to testify to His risen presence. She was the recipient of four special graces: to see angels; to see Jesus risen; to be the first

to see ³ Him alive; and to be a proclaimer of the good news. Christians today are also the recipients of special grace; they too are given this new responsibility to witness to the world (cf. Matt. 28:16–20).

Jesus' words, **I am returning to My Father** indicate His unique sonship. **Mary** and the other women told **the news to the disciples**, but according to Luke, they did not believe her or the other women "because their words seemed to them like nonsense" (Luke 24:11; cf. Luke 24:23).

H. Jesus' appearance to His disciples (20:19–23).

John 20:19–20. The disciples had almost been arrested with Jesus. They remained under the **fear of death** at the hands of **the Jews** (i.e., the Jewish authorities), so they met in secret at night, with fear, behind locked doors. (What a contrast with their boldness about seven weeks later on the day of Pentecost!) **Jesus** passed through the door, as indicated by the fact that when the **doors were locked**, He **came and stood among them** (cf. v. 26). This showed the power of His new resurrection body. But His body had substantial form and continuity with His pre-Cross body (cf. v. 27). His first words, **Peace be with you!** were a conventional greeting similar to *šālôm* in Hebrew. But the words were now invested with a deeper and fuller meaning (cf. 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7).

³ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 343). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Seeing the wounds in **His** pierced **hands and side**, they **were overjoyed** (though at first they were frightened, as Luke stated [Luke 24:37–44]). What a change from their fear and despondency!

John 20:21–23. Jesus then recommissioned the disciples as His apostles: He was **sending** them as His representatives, **as the Father** had **sent** Him (cf. 17:18). They were sent with His authority to preach, teach, and do miraculous signs (Matt. 28:16–20; Luke 24:47–49). For their new commission they needed spiritual power. So **He breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit.** The image and wording of breathing on them recalls God’s creative work in making Adam (Gen. 2:7). Now this post-Resurrection “breathing” was a new kind of creative work for they would soon become new creations (Eph. 2:8–10). **This reception of the Spirit was in anticipation of the day of Pentecost and should be understood as a partial limited gift of knowledge, understanding, and empowerment until Pentecost, 50 days later.**

Forgiveness of sins is one of the major benefits of the death of Jesus. It is the essence of the New Covenant (cf. Matt. 26:28; Jer. 31:31–34). Proclaiming the forgiveness of sins was the prominent feature of the apostolic preaching in the Book of Acts. Jesus was giving the apostles (and by extension, the church) the privilege of announcing heaven’s terms on how a person can receive forgiveness. If one believes in Jesus, then a Christian has the right to announce his forgiveness. If a person rejects Jesus’ sacrifice, then a Christian can announce that that person is **not forgiven.**

I. Jesus' appearance to Thomas (20:24–29).

John 20:24–29. In his Gospel, John has traced the development of unbelief, which culminated in Jesus' enemies crucifying Him. Conversely, John also traced the disciples' development of faith, which was now climaxed in **Thomas**.

The disciples were affirming Jesus' resurrection to Thomas (**told** in v. 25 is *elegon*, an imperf. tense which indicates their continual activity). But **he** remained unconvinced. **He wanted bodily proof of Jesus' risen state**. The reappearance of Jesus a **week later** provided the opportunity Thomas wanted. **Again ... Jesus** miraculously entered a room with **locked** doors (cf. v. 19). He asked **Thomas** to touch Him (cf. "showed" in v. 20) and to **stop doubting and believe**. This was a forthright challenge to a personal commitment.

Thomas' response, **My Lord and My God!** is the high point of the Gospel. Here was a skeptical man, confronted by the evidence of Jesus' resurrection. He announced that Jesus, the Man of Galilee, is God manifest in the flesh. Thus the ⁴ truths in the first chapter were realized personally in this apostle (1:1, 14, 18). The Resurrection

- (a) demonstrated that what Jesus predicted about His being raised was true (Mark 8:31; 9:9, 31; 10:34; John 2:19),
- (b) proved that Jesus is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4) and was sent by God ("vindicated by the Spirit," 1 Tim. 3:16),
- (c) testified to the success of His mission of salvation (Rom. 4:25),
- (d) entitled Jesus to a position of glory (1 Peter 1:11), and

⁴ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 343–344). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

(e) proclaimed that Jesus is the “Lord” (Acts 2:36).

Jesus then pronounced a blessing on all who would come to faith without the help of a visible, bodily manifestation to them (John 20:29; cf. 1 Peter 1:8). This blessing comes to all who believe on the basis of the proclaimed gospel and the evidences for its validity. Believers living today are not deprived by not seeing Him physically; instead, they are the recipients of His special blessing: **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**

J. The purpose of the book (20:30–31).

John 20:30–31. John explained His purpose in writing this Gospel, that people might contemplate and perceive the theological significance of Jesus’ miracles (*sēmeia*, “signs”). Many people today ignore, deny, or rationalize Jesus’ miracles. Even in Jesus’ day some people attributed them to God whereas others attributed them to Satan (3:2; 9:33; Matt. 12:24). To ignore, deny, or rationalize them in that day was impossible because the miracles were manifold and manifest. John indicated He was aware of the Synoptic miracles: **Jesus did many other miraculous signs.** In fact, **35 different miracles are recorded in the four Gospels** (see the list at John 2:1–11). **John selected 7 for special consideration in order that people might come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah, and the Son of God.** (The NIV marg. reading, “may continue to believe,” is probably not the correct textual reading; the NIV text correctly renders the Gr. by the words **may** believe.)

V. The Epilogue (chap. 21)

John's purposes in this final chapter are (a) *to reveal how Jesus reinstated Peter after his great fall*, and (b) *to correct a serious error about the Lord's return*. The chapter also provides additional clues to the identity of the author. Some critics have argued that this chapter is anticlimactic after the great conclusion in chapter 20, and therefore was written by another (anonymous) writer. But the linguistic evidence does not support this notion. In addition, other great books of Scripture have appendixes after reaching a grand climax (cf., e.g., Rom. 16 following Rom. 15:33). Thus John 21 is neither without value nor out of harmony with other Bible books.

A. Jesus' appearance by the lake (21:1–14).

John 21:1–3. An angel had promised that **Jesus** would meet with **His disciples** in Galilee (Matt. 28:7). It was significant evidence for Jesus to manifest Himself in a different location and at a later time (cf. Acts 1:3). (**The Sea of Tiberias** is another name for the Sea of Galilee; cf. comments on John 6:1.) The **disciples** had gone to Jerusalem and had experienced a tumultuous series of events: the Triumphal Entry, the expectation of a new kingdom, a betrayal by a trusted friend, near arrest, denial of Jesus by their leader Peter, the agonizing crucifixion of Jesus, the Resurrection, and the manifestations of the risen Lord. Understandably they were confused and unsure of the future.

Peter went fishing since he may have misunderstood the Lord's commission (20:22). **Peter** also had a family to support and undoubtedly had a sense of failure over his sin in denying the Lord. His leadership quality is evident in that six other

disciples went **with** him. Their lack of success without Jesus' aid (cf. 15:5) and their great catch with His help gave them direction for their new lives.

John 21:4–6. Early in the morning the **disciples** failed to recognize **Jesus ... on the shore** either because of distance or lack of light. **He called out to them, Friends, haven't you any fish?** ⁵ The word "friends" (*paidia*) is literally, "little children" or perhaps "lads." In response to His authoritative voice and instruction (v. 6), they hauled in a huge catch **of fish** (cf. v. 11). This similarity to an earlier miracle (Luke 5:1–11) enabled the disciples to identify the Lord and to recognize His ability to do great signs after His resurrection.

John 21:7–9. This revelation of **Jesus** and His power to His disciples dawned first in the beloved **disciple**, who exclaimed, **It is the Lord!** (cf. 20:28) John had also been first to discern the significance of the grave clothes (20:8). Hearing John's word, **Peter** immediately **jumped into the water**, and apparently swam to Jesus. This is typical of his impulsive nature (he went first into the tomb; 20:6). This psychological insight into Peter's character reinforces the historical reliability of John's eyewitness testimony. Peter's action contrasts strikingly with the time he started to sink in the water (Matt. 14:30). Jesus had prepared a breakfast of charcoaled **fish** with **bread** for the hungry disciples.

⁵ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 344). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

John 21:10–11. Mention of the **large fish, 153** in all, has given rise to all kinds of allegorical and symbolic interpretations. But probably John mentioned the number as a matter of historical detail. With a group of men fishing, the common procedure would be for them to count the fish they caught and then divide them equally among the fishermen. A spiritual lesson here is that great blessing comes to one's efforts when he follows the Lord's will.

John 21:12–14. When **Jesus** invited them to eat with Him, **none of** them asked **who** He was for **they knew it was the Lord**. The fact that both Mary (20:14) and the Emmaus Road disciples (Luke 24:13–35) did not immediately identify the Lord may indicate some difference in the Lord's resurrection appearance here. Yet the identification was so certain that all the disciples knew it was **Jesus**. Their meal together stamped an indelible impression on their minds. Years later in his preaching Peter spoke of himself as a reliable witness who ate and drank with Jesus after His resurrection (Acts 10:41). **The third time** ⁶ means Jesus' third appearance to the apostles, which John narrated (cf. John 20:19, 24 for the other two appearances).

B. Jesus' reinstating of Peter (21:15–23).

John 21:15–17. Earlier **Peter** had denied Jesus beside a fire (18:18, 25). Now beside another fire he was restored publicly.

⁶ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 344–345). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Jesus called him **Simon Son of John**, as He had when He first met Peter (1:42). Jesus asked him, **Do you truly love Me more than these?** What did Jesus mean by “these”? Jesus probably was referring to the disciples, in light of Peter’s proud statement that he never would fall away no matter what others did (Matt. 26:33, 35; Luke 22:33; John 13:37). *Jesus’ threefold question and threefold commission of apostolic mission contrast directly with Peter’s three denials.* Three times Peter said he did not even know the Lord (18:17, 25, 27); now three times he said he loved the Lord (21:15–17). No matter how great a person is, he may fall (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12). But God’s grace and forgiveness will restore the repentant. This provision of grace would be important, for the church would soon face great persecution and even church leaders would waver in their commitments.

Three times Jesus commissioned Peter to care for the flock: **Feed My lambs;** (v. 15); **Take care of My sheep** (v. 16); **Feed My sheep** (v. 17). Some Roman Catholics assume that this asserts Peter’s primacy, but this is foreign to the passage (cf. 1 Peter 5:2). In Jesus’ three questions of **love** (*agapas, agapas, and phileis*) and His three commands of duty (*boske, “tend”; poimaine, “herd, lead to pasture”; boske*) various Greek synonyms are used. Since it is difficult to see any consistent distinctions that John intended, most scholars see these as stylistic variations.

John 21:18–19. I tell you the truth (cf. comments on 1:51) introduces a solemn prediction of Peter’s coming crucifixion. In old age Peter was tied to a cross and had his hands stretched out (cf. 1 Clement 5:4; 6:1; Eusebius *The Ecclesiastical*

History 2. 25). Obedience to Jesus' command,⁷ **Follow Me**, is the key issue in every Christian's life. As Jesus followed the Father's will, so His disciples should follow their Lord whether the path leads to a cross or to some other difficult experience.

John 21:20–23. Peter, having been informed about God's plan for his life, naturally wondered what the future held for his friend John, **the disciple whom Jesus loved**. Jesus sharply rebuked Peter for being curious about God's will for another's life: **What is that to you? You must follow Me**. Some disciples can be easily distracted by unnecessary questions about God's secret will; as a result they neglect God's plainly revealed will. God's plans for Christians vary and His reasons are not often made known. Peter was to commit himself to God's plain commands to him.

John then corrected a faulty inference made by some believers that John **would not die**. Interestingly Jesus' last words recorded by John in this Gospel refer to His **return**. Of course, Jesus gave no indication *when* He would return. The false **rumor** about Jesus' words to Peter show the possibility of misunderstanding God's promises. Christians must seek to understand God's Word accurately.

C. The colophon (21:24–25).

John 21:24–25. The Fourth Gospel ends with information about its composition. The beloved **disciple** is identified as the author (cf. comments on "Authorship" in the *Introduction*). The first sentence in verse 24 may have been someone other than John, but the wording sounds Johannine (cf. 19:35). **These things** most likely

⁷ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 345). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

refer to the entire Gospel. The words, **We know that his testimony is true**, were probably written by someone other than John. They are an endorsement, perhaps by the Ephesian church, or a testimony from the early church as a whole. They were certainly in a position to know the facts better than any generation since then.

The final verse—with its statement about the world **not** having **room for all the books that could be written** about Jesus' deeds—may seem ⁸ at first glance to be an exorbitant overstatement. (The **I** seems to suggest John as the author of this verse though that is uncertain.) Yet the Gospels record only a small sample of Jesus' words and works. Someone has estimated that a person can read aloud Jesus' words recorded in the Gospels in only about three hours. But if all that the infinite Son of God said and did in His Incarnation were pondered, the resulting commentary would be endless. ⁹

⁸ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 345–346). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁹ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 346). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.