

Epilogue: What Happens After Easter Sunday?

Today we begin a new series from the final chapter of John's gospel that takes us to a time period after Easter Sunday. As we know, Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover feast (Luke 22:1). Beginning in chapter 20 of John's gospel, we see that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. In the evening of that Resurrection Sunday, he appears for the first time to his disciples as a group (John 20:19). We saw that Christ, initially, calmed their fears. Following this, Jesus commissions his disciples to be sent into the world for gospel proclamation in the power of the Holy Spirit. What we're seeing, in effect, is the infancy of the New Covenant church. Although there was certainly a church in the Old Testament *primarily* made up of the children of Israel—but also some from the surrounding pagan nations (think Rahab and Ruth)—we learn from Paul in Ephesians 3:4-5 that there's a great mystery that's been revealed in Jesus. The Gentiles are "fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Jesus has come! He has lived, died and has risen again. There are differences in the New Covenant and the Old Covenant church but there's continuity as well. Jesus has fulfilled all the Old Covenant types and shadows. These Jewish disciples, then, are the small beginnings of a church that's soon to explode in growth after the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. That being true, what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

—Jesus Claims Our Total Allegiance

That is to say, Jesus requires our *complete devotion and loyalty*. "After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias." (21:1) The phrase translated, "after this," gives us chronological forward movement in time but it doesn't tell us exactly *how much time*. Keep in mind that Jesus and his disciples had been in Jerusalem. But it's important to remind us that Jesus gave his disciples some instruction, prior to his crucifixion, pertaining to where he wanted them to meet him after the resurrection. Obviously, for a while anyway, this has not registered with the disciples. We know this because initially, they've been hiding out in Jerusalem. And yet, Mark records that Jesus tells his disciples that after his resurrection "I will go before you into Galilee." (14:28) Interestingly, after Jesus' resurrection when some of the women first see an angel at the empty tomb, the angel tells them: "But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee."

At some point the disciples realize that—if they're to find Jesus—they'll have to go to Galilee. And this is exactly what we see here. As we begin John 21, they've already traveled the almost 80 miles from Jerusalem to the Sea of Galilee—called here in John the Sea of Tiberias—to see Jesus who is now set to "reveal" himself to a group of his disciples. Notice that not every one of the eleven disciples are in Galilee at this point. In fact, we discover that there's only seven that are listed in verse 2: Simon Peter and Thomas, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, James and John,

called the “sons of Zebedee,” and two other unnamed disciples. We don’t know exactly when the disciples arrived at the Sea of Galilee or how long they had been there, but we’re told in verse 3 that Simon Peter—always the leader—says, “I’m going fishing” to which the others respond, “We will go with you.”

The disciples get into the boat and fish all night, but they don’t catch a single fish. Some have suggested that these disciples are showing that, by going back to their old life of fishing, they’re no longer committed to following Jesus. But this is certainly not true. They’re here to see Jesus! Fishing will provide them with some important needs; for example, they have to eat and they may even catch enough fish to sell while they wait for Jesus. Their allegiance to Jesus is not in question. The only thing in question for them at this point is when will Jesus show up? This should be a reminder to all Christians. We may have to wait, at times, until Jesus *shows up*, e.g., until he answers our prayers or until we search the scriptures in order to discover the way forward, but one thing that must never be in question is our total allegiance—our total *devotion and loyalty* to our Lord. And this is to be done—not merely on Easter Sunday—but every day of our lives.

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