

Lesson 23

John 21

TRANSFORMED TO SERVE

Memory verse: “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” (Mark 1:17 NIV)

This Gospel began with a theological prologue (1:1-18), and it ends with a practical epilogue. John concluded his narrative, designed to bring unbelievers to faith in Jesus Christ, in chapter 20. Chapter 21 contains instruction for those who have come to faith in Him, and explains how they are to serve Him as they carry out their mission (20:21-23). Many of the prominent themes in the rest of the Gospel recur here.

The structure of this chapter is similar to the rest of the Gospel's. John first narrated an event in vv. 1-14 whereby Jesus appeared to seven disciples in Galilee. Jesus reminded these disciples of lessons that He had taught them previously, that were important for them to remember in view of their mission. He had also set the stage for an even more important lesson that would follow.

Jesus then proceeded to use the miracle that He had just performed as the background for important instruction in vv. 15-23. John presented Jesus doing this many times in this Gospel. The repetition of this pattern in the epilogue is evidence that the epilogue was an original part of the Gospel. Jesus focused His teaching on Peter, but clearly He wanted all disciples to view Peter as their representative.

Finally he concluded his Gospel (vv. 24-25). Some commentators refer to this ending as a colophon. A "colophon" is the finishing stroke and crowning touch to a document. It is an inscription placed at the end of a book or manuscript that contains basic information about it, such as the title, writer's name, and date and place of writing. However, it is more similar to a postscript because it contains only hints of the writer's identity. Mainly it claims that this Gospel is a reliable, though partial, record of Jesus' actions.

However, the average reader would conclude that John completed his book with the dramatic testimony of Thomas (John 20:28–31), and the reader would wonder why John added another chapter. The main reason is the apostle Peter, John's close associate in ministry (Acts 3:1). John did not want to end his gospel without telling his readers that Peter was restored to his apostleship. Apart from the information in this chapter, we would wonder why Peter was so prominent in the first twelve chapters of the book of Acts.

John had another purpose in mind: he wanted to refute the foolish rumour that had spread among the believers that John would live until the return of the Lord (John 21:23). John made it clear that our Lord's words had been greatly misunderstood and he also wanted to teach us how to relate to the risen Christ.

Jesus Christ is transforming lives today. Wherever He finds a believer who is willing to yield to His will, listen to His Word, and follow His way, He begins to transform that believer and accomplish remarkable things in that life. He also begins to do wonderful things through that life.

Peter and John have been off the scene (except for their books) for centuries, but we are still here. We are taking His place and taking their place. What a responsibility! What a privilege! We can succeed only as we permit Him to transform us.

Scripture Reading: John 21

To learn in this lesson: 1) Obedient Fishers of Men 2) Shepherds love the Lord 3) Disciples must follow Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

1.) How did the Lord Jesus Christ show his disciples (including us) in verses 1 to 8, the first responsibility of a believer?

2) The next responsibility given by Jesus to believers is a picture of shepherds. How is this picture drawn out in verses 9 to 18?

3) How can disciples apply the lessons taught by Jesus Christ (refer verses 19-25) to follow Him?.