

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter Gospel C

[Jn 21:1-19 or 21:1-14](#)

Gospel

At that time, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.

He revealed himself in this way.

Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus,

Nathanael from Cana in Galilee,

Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples.

Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing."

They said to him, "We also will come with you."

So they went out and got into the boat,

but that night they caught nothing.

When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore;

but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?"

They answered him, "No."

So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something."

So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in

because of the number of fish.

So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord."

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord,

he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad,

and jumped into the sea.

The other disciples came in the boat,

for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards,

dragging the net with the fish.

When they climbed out on shore,

they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread.

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught."

So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore

full of one hundred fifty-three large fish.

Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, "Come, have breakfast."

And none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?"

because they realized it was the Lord.

Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them,

and in like manner the fish.

This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,

"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"

Simon Peter answered him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."

He then said to Simon Peter a second time,

“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”  
Simon Peter answered him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”  
Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.”  
Jesus said to him the third time,  
“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”  
Peter was distressed that Jesus had said to him a third time,  
“Do you love me?” and he said to him,  
“Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”  
Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.  
Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger,  
you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted;  
but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands,  
and someone else will dress you  
and lead you where you do not want to go.”  
He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.  
And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.”

**or**

At that time, Jesus revealed himself to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.  
He revealed himself in this way.  
Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus,  
Nathanael from Cana in Galilee,  
Zebedee’s sons, and two others of his disciples.  
Simon Peter said to them, “ am going fishing.”  
They said to him, “e also will come with you.”  
So they went out and got into the boat,  
but that night they caught nothing.  
When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore;  
but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.  
Jesus said to them, “Children, have you caught anything to eat?”  
They answered him, “No.”  
So he said to them, “Cast the net over the right side of the boat  
and you will find something.”  
So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in  
because of the number of fish.  
So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.”  
When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord,  
he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad,  
and jumped into the sea.  
The other disciples came in the boat,  
for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards,  
dragging the net with the fish.  
When they climbed out on shore,  
they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread.  
Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you just caught.”  
So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore  
full of one hundred fifty-three large fish.  
Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, “Come, have breakfast.”  
And none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?”  
because they realized it was the Lord.  
Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them,  
and in like manner the fish.  
This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples  
after being raised from the dead.

Jerome Biblical Commentary

**(IV) Appendix or Epilogue: Appearance in Galilee (21:1-25).** There can hardly be any doubt that ch. 21 is an appendix added to the Gospel that had already been concluded with ch. 20. What remains in doubt is whether the addition was made by the Evangelist himself, the author of chs. 1-20. Although no apodictic answer can be made to this question, a number of considerations lead to the probable conclusion that it is the work of disciples subsequent to the death of the Evangelist (→ 8 above; see the linguistic and other evidence in Bultmann, *Das Evangelium*, 542-47). The appendix appears to have been composed of testimony from the same witness who stands behind chs. 1-20, but the testimony is parallel to rather than a part of the preceding unities, and hence the chapter has not been completely integrated with the rest of the Gospel. Whoever its literary author, however, the ms. evidence indicates that it was a part of the Gospel from the beginning, that is, presumably, from the time of the Gospel’s publication subsequent to the death of the Evangelist. Concerning the canonicity and inspiration of the chapter, there has never been any doubt. The reasons for the addition of this supplement will appear from the matters with which it deals.

(Besobrasoff, S. [Bishop Cassian], “John XXI,” *NTS* 3 [1956-57] 132-36. Boismard, M.-E., “Le chapitre XXI de Saint Jean. Essai de critique littéraire” *RB*54 [1947] 473-501. Vaganay, L., “La finale du Quatrième Évangile,” *RB*45 [1936] 512-28.)

**181 (A) Jesus with the Disciples by the Sea (21:1-14).** In this supplement the Gospel of Jn joins with Mt (see also Mk 16:7), who places in Galilee the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to the disciples; Lk and Jn 20 speak only of appearances in Jerusalem. There is no attempt in Jn to harmonize the Galilean history of the appearances (which seems to be the older of the Gospel traditions) with the Jerusalemite; no explanation is given for the sudden departure of the disciples from Jerusalem and their return to their former pursuits.

**1. some time afterward:** The time indication is very general (cf. 3:22; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1) and does not necessarily refer to any specific event preceding. “Again” is found in some mss. either before or after the word “appeared”; this seems to be an attempt to tie this originally independent chapter more closely to the rest of the Gospel. *the Sea of Tiberias:* Only here in the Gospels is this name used (see comment on 6:1). **2.** Seven disciples are mentioned, of whom the first three are familiar to us from John’s Gospel. *Zebedee’s sons:* This designation is of the Syn tradition; they are not mentioned elsewhere in Jn. *two other disciples:* Why these are not named is not clear; however, John has used such anonymity before (cf. 1:35).

**182 3-4.** The return of the disciples to their former homes and occupations is really plausible only when we recognize that this chapter was originally independent of ch. 20 and that the Jerusalem appearances are not presupposed. Similarly, the failure of the disciples to recognize Jesus (as in 20:14; Lk 24:16) sounds like the usual concomitant of an initial appearance of the Lord. The reason for the inclusion of this narrative will appear, however, from v. 11. **5-6.** The scene described is taken from the

familiar life of Galilee. Even the directions to cast the nets on the right side (the lucky side) of the boat would not necessarily imply superhuman knowledge (though the Gospel probably understands it as such in view of the following verse), for a man standing on shore could often see a school of fish hidden from the view of those in the boat. The narrative is reminiscent of that in Lk 5:4ff., which the Third Gospel has placed at the beginning of the Galilean ministry. **7.** *that disciple whom Jesus loved* [→ 3 above]: In this chapter he is associated with Peter as so often before (13:23f.; 20:2; 18:15?) and is the first to recognize the Lord (cf. 20:4). Probably the superabundant draught of fish is to be regarded as a “sign,” recalling the great quantity of wine at Cana (2:6), the multiplication of the loaves (6:11), the living water (4:14; 7:37ff.), the eternal life given by the Good Shepherd (10:10), and the plenitude of the Spirit (3:34). *Simon Peter wrapped his outer garment around him*: The Jews were sensitive about performing greetings without being properly clad. Peter’s precipitate action is typical of the man as he is portrayed in the Gospels. **8-9.** Nothing further is said of Peter’s action, but the rest of the disciples are immediately brought into the scene with Christ. The meal prepared by the Lord cannot but recall the multiplication of the loaves (6:9), in turn a sign of the Eucharist, the distribution of the life of the Spirit. **10-11.** *bring some of the fish*: This request is not to be explained in connection with the meal, which has already been prepared. It is probable, rather, that the Lord’s purpose is to stress the role of fishing as symbolizing the apostolic mission (cf. Mt 4:19; Mk 1:17; Lk 5:10). *one hundred and fifty-three*: Most commentators, ancient and modern, have felt that this number is meant as a symbol, but there has been no agreement as to its nature. Since, as appears likely, the fish symbolize those who will be brought into the Church through the apostolic preaching (and thus, the net that remains untorn may have the same meaning as Christ’s tunic in 19:23f.), Jerome’s interpretation is attractive (*PL* 25. 474), namely that ancient zoologists calculated the species of fish at precisely 153. The meaning, then, would refer to all the kinds of men for whom the disciples will “fish,” and we could have here an echo of Jesus’ words in Mt 13:47 (cf. also Ez 47:9f.). Unfortunately, in the work to which Jerome refers in justification of his statement (the *Halieutica* of Oppian), no such reference can be found. It has been noted that 153 is the “triangular” number of 17 ( $1 + 2 + 3 + \dots + 17 = 153$ ), but what 17 would then signify is not clear. For Barrett the significance is in the numbers 7 and 10, numbers of completeness and perfection, thus representing “the full total of the catholic and apostolic Church.” Others appeal to gematria (the numerical value of letters), a symbolic form much in use by the Jews (see Ap 13:18), but the variety of words that can be formed whose numerical equivalent is 153 (*Gk?* *Aram?* *Hebr?*) is endless and much dependent on subjective judgments (cf. H. Kruse, *VD* 38 [1960] 129-48, who favors the Hebr  $q^{\text{c}}\text{hal h\bar{a}}^{\text{a}}\text{h\bar{a}b\bar{a}}$ , “the Church of love”). **12-13.** In Lk 24:42f. there is a scene in which the Risen Christ takes a meal with the disciples, but its purpose is different. Here it is not said that Jesus himself partook of the food but that he distributed it: Again this recalls the language of 6:11, of the miracle of the loaves that took place beside this same lake. Again there is a Lucan parallel (cf. Lk 24:30f., 35). *not one of the disciples dared to inquire of him, “Who are you?”*: Cf. 4:27; 8:25. Some see in this a fulfillment of 16:23, but it seems rather that the disciples, while recognizing the Jesus they have known, are at the same time overawed by what has taken place in him through the resurrection, and dare not attempt to penetrate the mystery further (Bultmann). **14.** *the third time*: This verse is the work of the author(s) of this chapter, who thus connects it with ch. 20 (the appearance to Mary Magdalene is not counted).

**183 (B) Peter’s Commission (21:15-19).** The *NT* is at one in ascribing primacy to Peter in the apostolic Church (cf. Gal 2:11ff., Paul resisted even Peter; Acts 1-15 *passim*), and that by the Lord’s own decree (Mt 16:18). As do the other Gospels, Jn has consistently brought out Peter’s special position from the significant note of the change of his name in 1:42. In this present section of the supplement the Johannine witness to Peter’s primacy has been appended to complete the Gospel testimony.

**15-17.** The traditional interpretation, that the Lord's threefold question demanding a threefold profession of love is to correspond to Peter's threefold denial, is doubtless correct. *do you love me more than these?:* The question is artfully phrased, and Peter proves equal to the test. Previously he had been serenely confident of himself (13:37; in Mk 14:29 he contrasts his fidelity with that of the other disciples); now he will assume nothing to himself nor will he pretend to compare his love with any other's, but he humbly asserts what the Lord already knows concerning his love. Two different words are used for "love" in this passage, but in Jn they have been used consistently as synonyms; similarly, probably no distinction is intended in the use of the words "lambs" and "sheep." *feed my sheep:* Christ concedes his own office of Shepherd to Peter (10:4, 27; cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pt 2:25; 5:2-4). **18-19.** It will be the destiny of Peter to follow the Good Shepherd in every detail, even to the laying down of his life (10:11). *when you were a young man...but when you get old...:* Materially, the Lord's words mean little more than: In youth a man may go freely where he wills, but in old age he must let himself be led where he wills not (Bultmann). But as is so often the case, there is a meaning beneath the surface, which Jn's readers would easily recognize. *you will stretch out your hands, and another will tie you fast:* Similar expressions are used by contemporary Christian and non-Christian writers to refer to crucifixion. It is to this that the author refers in v. 19 (cf. 12:33), noting the pregnant meaning of the Lord's "Follow me." This is the oldest written attestation to the tradition of Peter's martyrdom by crucifixion, an event well known to the Christians for whom this Gospel was written.

**184 (C) The Beloved Disciple (21:20-23).** This final short section has an understandable interest for the editors of the Gospel, in view of its reference to the witness whose testimony is enshrined in it. From these verses, it appears very likely that the beloved disciple had recently died, the last representative of the original apostolic band, and that the record of this saying of the Lord has been included in order to correct a misunderstanding that had become associated with it.

**20-21.** The Lord has just bidden Peter to follow him, and Peter now sees the beloved disciple doing just that, which prompts his question. *Lord, what about him?:* In context, this can only mean, what kind of death will he suffer?**22.** The Gospels agree that it was Jesus' practice to turn aside questions that were not pertinent or that reflected mere curiosity. Thus in Lk 13:23ff., in answer to a question about the relative number of the saved, he replies instead by stressing the difficulty of salvation. Here he tells Peter that the death of the beloved disciple is none of his concern. *suppose I would like him to remain until I come:* Jesus neither affirms nor denies the possibility; to do either would be to satisfy Peter's idle curiosity.**23.** But the very ambiguity of the answer, it seems, had created the impression in some quarters that the beloved disciple would not die before the Lord's coming, that is, in the parousia. Similar statements recorded in the Gospels (cf. Mk 9:1; Mt 24:34) had unquestionably contributed to the persuasion of many in the primitive Church that the parousia would be imminent (cf. 2 Thes 2), that it would occur before the end of the apostolic age. The most obvious sense of this verse is that the beloved disciple, the last of the apostolic age, has recently died, and this narrative has been included to explain that there had never been any promise otherwise.

**185 (D) Final Testimony (21:24-25).** We now read the conclusion of the final editors of the Gospel. *it is this same disciple who is the witness for these things:* It is the beloved disciple who is the author of the foregoing Gospel (→ 3 above). *it is he who wrote these things:* The question of the actual literary composition of the Gospel is, of course, not solved by this attestation; just as 19:19 says, literally, that "Pilate wrote a title," when the sense is that he was responsible for its being written, so here. *his testimony, we know, is true:* The community attests its acceptance of the testimony in the person of the disciples responsible for the finished Gospel. As in 20:30 the selective nature of the testimony is again pointed out. The famous hyperbole at the end stresses, of course, not so much the factual information available about Jesus as the potentialities it possessed for a theological understanding such as that of Jn

NTS *New Testament Studies*

RB *Revue biblique*

mss. Manuscripts

Syn Synoptic Gospels *or* Synoptic writers

PL J. Migne, *Patrologia latina* (Paris)

Gk Greek

Hebr Hebrew

VD *Verbum domini*

NT New Testament

Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., & Murphy, R. E. 1968]; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. *The Jerome Biblical commentary* (electronic ed.). Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ

### Haydock's Catholic Commentary

**Ver. 3.** How comes it that Peter, after his conversion, should return to his fishing, when Jesus Christ had said, that he that sets his hand to the plough, and looks back, is not worthy of the kingdom of heaven? The employments they applied to before their conversion, without being guilty of sin, these they might, without fault, exercise, after their conversion: therefore Peter returned to his fishing; but St. Matthew never returned to his custom-house, because when once converted, we never can be allowed to give ourselves to these employments, which of themselves lead to sin. And there are many pursuits which can scarcely, or not at all, be followed without sin. (St. Gregory, hom. xxiv. in Evan.)

**Ver. 5.** *Have you any meat?*[1] Have you any thing to eat? This is what is literally signified, both in the Latin and in the Greek text. (Witham)

**Ver. 7.** *It is the Lord.* St. Chrysostom says, we may here see the different characters of the two apostles, Peter and John; the former is more ardent, the latter more sublime; the first more vehement, the last more penetrating; for these reasons, John was the first to know Christ, Peter the first to hasten to him. (Hom. lxxxvi.)

**Ver. 8.** The evangelist praises Peter, and excuses the other apostles: all come to Christ; the former leaving his boat, his companions, his nets and prey, arrives more expeditiously; the latter with the impediments of the boat and nets, &c. &c. arrive also, but not so readily; a just figure this of religious, who leave all to go directly to God, and of those who remain in the world, and have to navigate a treacherous element with imminent danger of shipwreck. (Maldonatus) --- The poet Sedulius writes thus on the nets:

Pendula fluctivagam traxerunt retia prædam,

Per typicam noscenda viam; nam retia dignis

Lucida sunt præcepta Dei, quibus omnis in illa

Dextra parte manens concluditur, ac simul ulnis

Fertur apostolicis Domini ad vestigia Christi.

**Ver. 9.** *Hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread.* The fish caught in the net were not yet drawn to land. These things, then, were created out of nothing, or miraculously transported thither, by the divine power. (Witham)

**Ver. 11.** *Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three;* a figure of the great number to be converted by the labours of the apostles. (Witham)

**Ver. 12.** *And none of them who were at meat, durst ask him, who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.* It is likely he appeared to them with a countenance different, and brighter than before his death; yet they were presently so convinced it was Jesus, that they were ashamed to ask or doubt of it. (Witham)

**Ver. 14.** *This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to his disciples.* He had appeared to them more than thrice, even the very day of his resurrection. (Matthew xxviii. 16.) Here it is called the third time either because it was the third different day; or because it was the third time that he had then appeared to a considerable number together. After this, he appeared to them frequently, and conversed with them for forty days, till his ascension. See Acts i. 3. and 1 Corinthians xv. 5. (Witham) --- This must be understood of the third day, or of the third time, that our Saviour appeared to his apostles assembled: the first day, being the day of his resurrection; the second, eight days after, when St. Thomas saw, and believed; and on this day of their fishing. (St. Augustine, tract. 122. in Joan.) --- The evangelists relate ten different manifestations of our Saviour, after his resurrection. First, he was seen by the women at the sepulchre; 2ndly, he was again seen by the same holy women, returning from the sepulchre; 3rdly, by St. Peter; 4thly, by the two going to Emmaus; 5thly, by many at Jerusalem, when Thomas was not with them; 6thly, at the time when St. Thomas saw him; 7thly, at the sea of Tiberias; 8thly, by the eleven, on a mountain of Galilee, according to St. Matthew; 9thly, according to St. Mark, by the disciples, at their refreshment, because he was going to sup with them no more; and 10thly, on the day of his ascension, raised from the earth into heaven. (St. Augustine, de Concord. Ev. lib. iii. chap. 25.)

**Ver. 15.** *Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?* That is, more than any one of these love me. Christ puts this question thrice to St. Peter, that this triple protestation of love, says St. Augustine, might correspond to his triple denial. St. Peter did not answer that he loved him more than the rest did, which he could not know, but modestly said: *yea, Lord, thou knowest I love thee:* and the third time, *thou knowest all things,* and the hearts of all men, *thou knowest how much I love thee.* At each protestation, Jesus answered, *feed my lambs;* and the third time, *feed my sheep.* To feed, in the style of the Scriptures, is to guide, rule, and govern. St. Ambrose and some others take notice, as if by the *lambs*, might be understood the people, and by the *sheep*, those placed over them, as bishops, priests, &c. but others make no such difference in this place, betwixt *lambs* and *sheep*, only as comprehending all the members of Christ's Church, of what condition soever, even the rest of the apostles. For here it was that Christ gave to St. Peter that power which he had promised him, (Matthew xvi. 18.) that is, He now made St. Peter head[1] of his whole Church, as he had insinuated at the first meeting, when St. Andrew brought him to our Saviour, when he changed his name from Simon to Peter: again, when he chose him, and made him the first of his twelve apostles; but particularly, when he said, *thou art Peter, (a rock) and upon this rock will I build my Church,* &c. Upon this account the Catholic

Church, from the very first ages, hath always revered, and acknowledged the supreme power of the successors of St. Peter, in spirituals, over all Christian Churches. This appears also by the writings of Tertullian, of St. Irenæus, of St. Cyprian, of the greatest doctors and bishops, both of the west and east, of St. Jerome, St. Augustine, of St. Chrysostom, in several places, of the first general Councils, particularly of the great Council of Chalcedon, &c. (Witham) --- *Simon (son) of John*. The father's name is here added, to discriminate him from Simon Thaddeus, that every one might know that the chief care of the universal Church was not given to any other apostle but Peter. This Simon of John is the same as Simon Bar-jona. See Matthew xvi. 17. (Menochius) --- St. Peter had three times renounced his master; and Jesus, to give him an opportunity of repairing his fault by a triple confession, three several times demanded of him, if he loved him more than these? That, as St. Augustine remarks, he who had thrice denied through *fear* might thrice confess through *love*. (Calmet)

**Ver. 16-17.** The lambs and the sheep of our Saviour here mean the faithful, who compose his Church, without any distinction of Jew or Gentile. St. Peter, by these words, is appointed to take charge of the whole flock, as being the chief and prince of the apostles. He is, in some manner, the pastor, not of the sheep only, but of the pastors themselves. They have each their own flock to look after; but to him is committed the care of all; he alone is the pastor of all. (Calmet) --- *Feed my sheep*. Our Lord had promised the spiritual supremacy to St. Peter; (St. Matthew xvi. 19.) and here he fulfils that promise, by charging him with the superintendency of all his sheep, without exception; and consequently of his whole flock, that is, of his whole Church. (Challoner)

**Ver. 18.** *Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands ... signifying by what death he should glorify God*; that is, that a cross should be the instrument of his death and martyrdom. --- *Whither thou wouldst not*: which is no more than to say, that a violent death is against the natural inclination of any man, even though he be ever so willing, and disposed to undergo it. (Witham) --- By this is meant the martyrdom of St. Peter, which took place thirty-four years after this. He was first cast into prison, and then led out to punishment as Christ had foretold him. He stretched out his arms to be chained, and again he stretched them out, when he was crucified; for he died on the cross, as the ancients assure us. (Calmet)

**Ver. 21.** *Lord, what shall this man do?* St. Chrysostom thinks, it was the love and friendship, that St. Peter had for St. John, that moved him to ask this question. (Witham)

**Ver. 22.** *Jesus saith: so I will have him remain,[3] &c.* That is, in case I will have him remain; or, as it is in the Greek, *if I will have him remain, what is that to thee?* It is thy duty, and thy concern, to follow me. (Witham) --- When Christ told St. Peter to follow him, he meant, that he should go like himself to the death of the cross; but when he says of St. John, *So I will have him to remain till I come*, he insinuates that his beloved disciple should not undergo a violent death; but remain in the world, till he should visit him by death, and conduct him to glory. It may likewise be understood of the Revelations, in which our Saviour manifested himself in his glory to this his beloved disciple. [Apocalypse i. 13.] In the Greek, it is, *if I will have him to remain*; and this is the true reading, according to Estius, and Jansenius, bishop of Ghent, authorized by many Latin copies. Others refer these words of Christ to his coming to destroy Jerusalem: an epoch which St. John survived.

**Ver. 23.** *This saying, therefore:[4]* that is, a report went about among the disciples, the John



was *not to die*. But St. John himself, as St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom observe, took care to tell us, that Christ said not so. Nor do we find any sufficient grounds to think that St. John is not dead. (Witham)

**Ver. 24.** *This is that disciple, &c.* Some conjecture, that these words were added by the Church of Ephesus. But the ancient Fathers, St. Chrysostom, St. Cyril, St. Augustine, expound them as they do the rest, without any such remark. Nor is it unusual for a person to write in this manner of himself, as of a third person. It is what St. John hath done of himself, chap. xix. ver. 35. (Witham) --- Some conjecture, that these words were added by the Church of Ephesus, to point out St. John to be the real author of this history, and to record their own assent to this his testimony. But the ancient Fathers give no such comment. Nor is it unusual for a person to write of himself, as of a third person. It is what St. John hath done before.

**Ver. 25.** *The world[5] itself, I think, &c.* It is an hyperbolical way of speaking, says St. Cyril, common enough, even in the holy Scriptures; and only signifies, that a very great number of things, which Christ did and said, have not been recorded. (Witham) --- This is a figure of speech, called hyperbole, and only means, that it would require many, many books, to contain all the various actions and sayings of our divine Lord.

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[1] Ver. 5. Numquid pulmentarium habetis? *me ti prosphagion.*

[2] Ver. 15. He made St. Peter head of his whole Church. See Tertullian, lib. de pudicitia, p. 556. Ed. Rig. where he calls the successor of St. Peter, Pontificem maximum, & Episcopum Episcoporum; St. Irenæus, lib. iii. chap. 3; St. Cyprian, ep. 55. p. 84, Ed. Rig. Navigare audent & ad Petri Cathedram, atque ad Ecclesiam principalem. See St. Jerome, epist. lvii. and lviii. p. 175. nov. Ed. St. Augustine. --- St. Chrysostom on this place, hom. lxxxviii. p. 525. nov. Ed. Cur. aliis prætermisissis (Petrum) alloquitur? he answers, *ekkritos en ton Apostolon, kai stoma ton matheton, kai koruphe tou chorou*, cœtus illius caput. ... fratrum præfecturam suscipe; *egcheirizetai ten prostasian ton adelphon*. And a little after, p. 527. putting the objection, why St. James, and not St. Peter, was made bishop of Jerusalem, he answers; because St. Peter was to be over the whole universe; *tes oikoumenes echeirotone*, &c. The same St. Chrysostom, lib. ii. de Sacerd. chap. 1. tom. 1. p. 372. nov. Ed. Ben. qua de causa ille sanguinem effudit suum? certè ut oves eas acquireret, quarum curam tum Petro, tum Petri Successoribus committebat. --- Conc. Chalced. Lab. tom. 4. p. 565. The Council thus writes to St. Leo; omnibus constitutus interpres, quibus tu quidem tanquam caput membris præeras, &c. *pasin ermeneus kathestamenos*, &c. And p. 368. Petrus per Leonem ita locutus est; *Petros dia Leontos tauta exephonesen*. See Annotation for Matthew xvi. ver. 18.

[3] Ver. 22. Sic eum volo manere, *ean auton thelo menein.*

[4] Ver. 23. St. Augustine, tract. 124. p. 819. D. Hanc opinionem Joannes ipse abstulit, non hoc dixisse Dominum, aperta contradictione declarans: cur enim subjungeret, non dixit Jesus, non moritur, nisi ne hominum cordibus quod falsum fuerat inhæreret? &c. — So St. Chrysostom says, he spoke this to prevent or correct this mistake. p. 528. *diorthoutai.*

[5] Ver. 25. Nec ipsum arbitror mundum, &c. St. Cyril on this expression, p. 1123, *uperbolikos*. See St. Augustine at the end of his 124. tract. where he says, such hyperboles are found elsewhere in the holy Scripture.

Daily Bible Study (non-Catholic)

## THE WITNESS TO CHRIST

John 21:20–24

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, the disciple who at their meal reclined on Jesus's breast and said: "Lord, who is it who is to betray you?" When Peter saw this disciple, he said to Jesus: "Lord, what is going to happen to this man?" Jesus said to him: "If I wish him to remain till I come, what has that to do with you? Your job is to follow me." So this report went out to the brethren, that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say to him that he would not die. What he did say was: "If I wish him to remain till I come, what has that got to do with you?" This is the disciple who bears witness to these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his witness is true.

THIS passage makes it quite clear that John must have lived to a very old age; he must have lived on until the report went round that he was going to go on living until Jesus came again. Now, just as the previous passage assigned to Peter his place in the scheme of things, this one assigns to John his place. It was his function to be pre-eminently the witness to Christ. Again, people in the early Church must have made their comparisons. They must have pointed out how Paul went away to the ends of the earth. They must have pointed out how Peter went here and there shepherding his people. And then they may have wondered what was the function of John who had lived on in Ephesus until he was so old that he was past all activity. Here is the answer: Paul might be the pioneer of Christ, Peter might be the shepherd of Christ, but John was the witness of Christ. He was the man who was able to say: "I saw these things, and I know that they are true."

To this day the final argument for Christianity is Christian experience. To this day the Christian is the man who can say: "I know Jesus Christ, and I know that these things are true."

So, at the end, this gospel takes two of the great figures of the Church, Peter and John. To each Jesus had given his function. It was Peter's to shepherd the sheep of Christ, and in the end to die for him. It was John's to witness to the story of Christ, and to live to a great old age and to come to the end in peace. That did not make them rivals in honour and prestige, nor make the one greater or less than the other; it made them both servants of Christ.

Let a man serve Christ where Christ has set him. As Jesus said to Peter: "Never mind the task that is given to someone else. Your job is to follow me." That is what he still says to each one of us. Our glory is never in comparison with other men; our glory is the service of Christ in whatever capacity he has allotted to us.

## THE LIMITLESS CHRIST

John 21:25

There are many other things that Jesus did, and if they were written down one by one, I think that not even the world itself would be big enough to hold the written volumes.

IN this last chapter the writer of the Fourth Gospel has set before the Church for whom he wrote certain great truths. He has reminded them of the reality of the Resurrection; he has reminded them of the universality of the Church; he has reminded them that Peter and John are not competitors in honour, but that Peter is the great shepherd and John the great witness. Now he comes to the end; and he comes there thinking once again of the splendour of Jesus Christ. Whatever we know of Christ, we have only grasped a fragment of him. Whatever the wonders we have experienced, they are as nothing to the wonders which we may yet experience. Human categories are powerless to describe Christ, and human books are inadequate to hold him. And so John ends with the innumerable triumphs the inexhaustible power, and the limitless grace of Jesus Christ.

*The Gospel of John : Volume 2.* 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia