

Jesus Appears to Thomas, and to the Other Disciples While Fishing

John 20:24 – 21:14

Read John 20:24-27

v.24-25 - Who was not present when Jesus first appeared to the apostles? How do you feel about what he said?

We may criticize Thomas for being a “doubter,” yet it is to our advantage that he did so. He demonstrated that the disciples were not gullible people easily fooled by an impostor. They were skeptical, and were convinced only after adequate evidence was given. This scenario also demonstrates the value of being present when God’s people meet. For whatever reason he had not been present (v.19-23), he demonstrates that there are many blessings missed when we do not come to be with God’s people when they come together.

v.26-27 – How does Jesus enter the scene? What evidence and command did Jesus give Thomas? Look up: John 19:34

Jesus is present despite the locked door. The stone was not rolled away from the tomb for Jesus to exit, but for witnesses to look inside. Note that Jesus knew Thomas had earlier stated his doubts, even though Jesus had not been there when Thomas made the statement.

Read John 20:28-31

v.28 - Thomas demonstrates the absolute necessity, not just of believing who Jesus is, but also of confessing Jesus. Confession of Jesus is a defining condition of discipleship. Those who believe must confess (John 11:27). Those who won’t not confess cannot be saved even if they do believe. Look up: John 12:42-43, Romans 10:9, James 2:19

v.29-31 - Many today demand similar evidence like Thomas. They insist they must have some miracle in order for them to believe. Jesus clearly says that ought not be the basis of one’s faith and “you are hereby informed that you will not receive faith-jump-starting signs”. Look up: Hebrews. 11:1, 2 Corinthians 5:7

Read John 21:1-6

v.1 - Why are the disciples fishing back in Galilee after having been commissioned by Jesus?

John does not tell us why the disciples are back in Galilee, but in fact Jesus had told them to return there and he would meet them (Mark 14:28; 16:7).

v.3 - They seem to be unsure of what to do, until Peter decides to go fishing and the others come along. The disciples do not know what to do, so they do what is necessary, and in taking this initiative they put themselves in a place where Christ meets them. When we are uncertain what to do we should simply do our duty and God will show up.

They caught nothing. This prepares them to learn apart from Jesus they can do nothing (John 15:5). See v.6

Read John 21:7-14

v.7 - Why did it take so long for them to recognize Jesus after having seen him more than once at this point?

Earlier, Mary recognized Jesus when he called her name (20:16), and the disciples recognized him through his wounds (20:20). Now he is recognized through the abundance that comes through obedience to his word. Have you had such an experience?

The NIV translation gives the wrong impression; it suggests Peter was working with his undergarment on and added his outer garment before swimming to shore. This would be a good way to drown. The text, however, says that he was naked (*en gar gymnos*, paraphrased in the NIV), and this seems to have been typical for such work (see NASB). Most likely he had been working naked and had put on a loincloth before swimming to shore.

v.9- When they got to shore, what did they see Jesus had done?

The Lord has breakfast ready for them, another sign of his grace and provision. Jesus knows our every need. This ought to bring every believer immeasurable peace. Have you ever found your needs were met by God before you thought to ask?

v.12 - Throughout this encounter with Jesus the disciples have not said anything. The scene is one of great awe. The lyrics to the chorus in the Mercy-Me song, “I Can only imagine” envision what it will be like when we come into the presence of Jesus; and they read:

Surrounded by Your Glory, what will my heart feel? Will I dance for you, Jesus? Or in awe of You, be still? Will I stand in Your presence, or to my knees will I fall? Will I sing 'Hallelujah!'? Will I be able to speak at all? I can only imagine! I can only imagine!

v.14 - This is in fact the fourth appearance recounted by John. But John is counting appearances to the disciples as a group, which would not have included Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene.

Such fellowship with Jesus at a meal reminds us of the many times he broke-bread during his ministry, especially at the Last Supper. This occasion, as well as the feeding of the five thousand, brings echoes of Communion. This meal represents a central aspect of Communion: spiritual union with the risen Lord in the midst of his people.