JOHN 21

Breakfast on the Shore, Follow Me

the risen Lord at the lake, a second charcoal fire, three questions and one command

> *“He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, 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, “Tend My sheep.”*
> JOHN 21:17

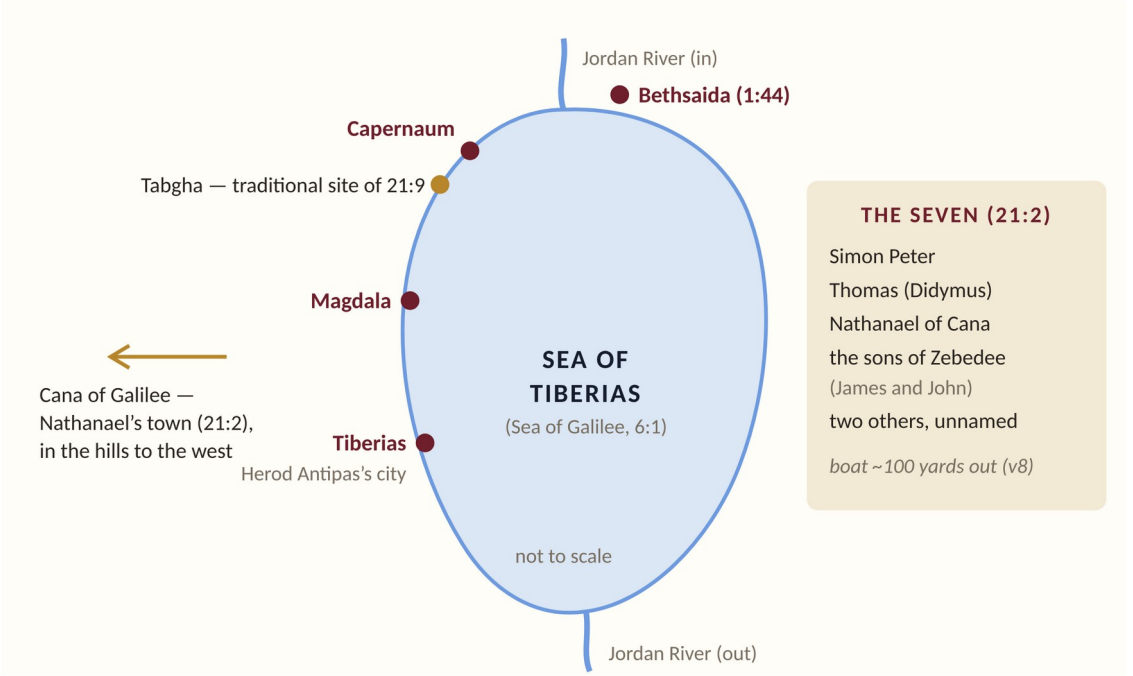
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where we are in John

1. John 20 seems to end the book: “many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that”…

2. The scene moves north. The angel had said, “go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you’” (Mark 16:7).

3. The chapter leans hard on two earlier scenes.



A Night of Nothing

Seven men, an empty net, a Stranger on the beach — and "It is the Lord"

JOHN 21:4

But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

DAVID GUZIK

Motives debated, nets empty either way; John first to see, Peter first to go.

R.C. SPROUL

Critics answered; expert fishermen with nothing to show; Peter dives and swims.

C.H. SPURGEON

Means must be used, means alone fail; Christ on the shore gives the catch.

MATTHEW HENRY

The hand of the diligent returns empty; sink or swim, Peter goes to Jesus.

ἐφανέρωσεν

EPHANERŌSEN · "MANIFESTED"

From phaneroō, "to make visible, bring into the open."

Come and Have Breakfast

A fire already laid, a net that held, and bread from the hands of the risen Lord

JOHN 21:11

Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

DAVID GUZIK

The risen Lord cooks; their catch added to the menu, did not make it.

C.H. SPURGEON

Provender before prayer; you cannot live on catching and counting.

MATTHEW HENRY

Don’t ask whence the fire came; hunger is the best sauce.

ἀνθρακιά

ANTHRAKIA · “CHARCOAL FIRE”

A heap of burning coals — not a blaze of wood but a low charcoal bed for warmth or cooking.

Two charcoal fires

	THE FIRST CHARCOAL FIRE John 18:15–27	THE SECOND CHARCOAL FIRE John 21:9–17
WHEN	night, “for it was cold” (18:18)	“the day was now breaking” (21:4)
WHO LIT IT	the slaves and the officers	Jesus — “already laid” (21:9)
PETER	standing, warming himself	threw himself into the sea to reach Him
THREE TIMES	“I am not,” “I am not,” denied again	“You know that I love You” (21:15–17)
THE END	“a rooster crowed” (18:27)	“Tend My sheep … Follow Me!” (21:17, 19)

ἀνθρακιά (anthrakia, G439) — used only in these two scenes in the whole New Testament

John 18:18 and 21:9: the place of the fall becomes the place of the restoring

Read across each row: John uses the word for a charcoal fire only twice, and the second scene answers the first point for point.

Do You Love Me?

Three questions by a second fire — and a denier made a shepherd

JOHN 21:15

So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs."

DAVID GUZIK

More than the other disciples; agapas and phileo; His sheep, not Peter's.

R.C. SPROUL

Three meanings weighed; perhaps emphasis by repetition; feed the truth, don't entertain.

C.H. SPURGEON

Probe the wound; quality not quantity; do something to prove thy love.

MATTHEW HENRY

Every remembrance of pardoned sin renews the penitent's sorrow; feeding is teaching.

ἀγαπάω … φιλέω

AGAPAŌ … PHILEŌ · "LOVE … LOVE"

Jesus asks twice with agapaō (G25), Peter answers three times with phileō (G5368), and the third time Jesus takes up Peter's word: "phileis me?"

Three questions, three answers, three commands

	JESUS ASKS	PETER ANSWERS	JESUS COMMISSIONS
v15	*agapaō* "… do you love Me more than these?"	*phileō* "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."	*boskō* "Tend My lambs."
v16	*agapaō* "… do you love Me?"	*phileō* "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."	*poimainō* "Shepherd My sheep."
v17	*phileō* "… do you love Me?"	*phileō* "Lord, You know all things …"	*boskō* "Tend My sheep."

Three denials by one fire (18:17, 25, 27) — three confessions by another
and every confession answered with work: "My lambs … My sheep … My sheep"

Follow the Greek verbs: Jesus twice asks with agapaō, Peter answers each time with phileō, and the third time Jesus takes up Peter's own word.

You Follow Me

Peter's death foretold, a question about John, and the call that silences comparison

JOHN 21:22

Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"

DAVID GUZIK

Stretched hands mean a cross; keep on following; John's path is not yours.

C.H. SPURGEON

The main business of life is to follow Jesus; get on with your plowing.

MATTHEW HENRY

Nothing to thee how John dies; let Christ's words speak for themselves.

ζώννυμι
ZŌNNYMI · "GIRD"

To fasten a belt, tie up the long robe for action.

The Witness Is True

The beloved disciple signs his book — and admits it could never hold everything

JOHN 21:24

This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

DAVID GUZIK

The whole truth about Jesus could never be written; the book continues.

MATTHEW HENRY

They staked this life and the next on it; thank God for the books we have.

μαρτυρία
MARTYRIA · "TESTIMONY"

The noun (G3141) and its verb martyreō (G3140, "testifying") run through John like a thread: John the Baptist "came as a witness, to testify about the Light" (1:7), and at the cross the beloved…

What to carry from this chapter

1

The Lord meets failure at the place of failure.

Peter fell by a charcoal fire (18:18); Jesus restores him by another (21:9).

2

The question is designed to hurt so it can heal.

Henry: the threefold question “put him in mind of his threefold denial of Christ, and was plainly designed to do so.”

3

Breakfast before the hard conversation.

Spurgeon: “Our Lord began this third manifestation of himself, not with prayer, but with provender.”

4

Their catch added to the menu; it did not make it.

The fire, fish and bread were already there (v. 9).

More to carry

5

The sheep stay His.

“My lambs … My sheep … My sheep.”

6

Restoration ends in work, not in a feeling.

Each confession is answered by a command — tend, shepherd, tend — all present imperatives: keep on doing it.

7

Love, not performance, is the test.

Spurgeon: “love is the best evidence of piety” and Peter “answered not as to the quantity but as to the quality of his love.”

8

Peter would die his Master’s kind of death.

“Signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God” (v. 19) repeats John’s words about Jesus’ own death (12:33; 18:32).

Talk it through

1. Where have I gone back to “fishing” — the old life, the old way of coping — when I didn’t know what else to do?

2. What is my “charcoal fire” — the place or memory of my worst failure — and what would it mean to meet Jesus there?

3. Jesus fed Peter before He questioned him. How have I experienced His kindness before His correction?

4. If Jesus asked me today, “Do you love Me more than these?” — what would “these” be for me?

5. Who are the “lambs” Jesus has put near me to feed, and what would tending them look like this week?

CLOSING

John's Gospel ends on a beach with a fire, a meal and a question. The man who denied Jesus three times by one fire confesses his love three times by another and is sent to feed Christ's sheep. The last words Jesus speaks in the book are for every one of us who has failed Him: "You follow Me!"

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the John study page.