

## Worksheet #22: John 21:1–25

**Summary:** Serving as an epilogue to John's gospel, John 21 pairs with the prologue in John 1:1–18 to form a symmetrical “frame” around the main narrative, providing thematic unity. Although this “second ending” may seem redundant after the apparent conclusion in 20:30–31, it serves several necessary functions. For instance, the passage resolves the seemingly competitive relationship between Peter and the beloved disciple while also providing a smoother ending than would an abrupt stop immediately after the confrontation with Thomas in 20:26–29.<sup>1</sup>

The chapter records three incidents from a day of fishing in Galilee (cf. 6:1, where the “Sea of Tiberius” equals Galilee). On this day, Jesus appears to his disciples in the third post-resurrection appearance to the disciples recorded in this gospel (21:14).

A key figure in this chapter is Simon Peter, prominent in all four gospels as outspoken leader among the disciples. Here, it is Peter who initiates the fishing expedition (21:3); it is Peter who first responds when the disciples recognize the Lord (21:7); it is Peter who drags in the abundant catch (21:11); and it is Peter with whom the Lord carries on most of the recorded conversation (21:15–19). Three times the Lord asks Peter to affirm his love, which serves to rehabilitate Peter after the three denials (18:12–27).

Throughout the chapter, the “disciple whom Jesus loved” is right behind Peter at each moment. He appears in the list of disciples as one of “the sons of Zebedee” (21:2); he identifies Jesus on the shore (21:7); and he becomes the primary focus in the closing remarks (21:20–25). In an important statement, he identifies himself as the author of the gospel and an eyewitness of “many other things that Jesus did” not recorded elsewhere (21:24–25).

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>2</sup> (current passage in bold):

- I. INTRODUCTION: THE WORD MADE FLESH (1:1-18)
- II. THE BOOK OF SIGNS: THE SIGNS OF THE MESSIAH (1:19-12:50)
  - A. *The Forerunner and the Coming of the Messiah (1:19-51)*
  - B. *The Cana Cycle: Jesus' Inaugural Signs and Representative Conversations (2:1-4:54)*
  - C. *The Festival Cycle: Additional Signs amidst Mounting Unbelief (5-10)*
  - D. *Final Passover: Climactic Sign, the Raising of Lazarus, and Other Events (11-12)*
- III. THE BOOK OF EXALTATION: PREPARING THE NEW MESSIANIC COMMUNITY AND THE PASSION OF JESUS (13-20)
  - A. *The Cleansing and Instruction of the New Covenant Community, including Jesus' Final Prayer (13-17)*
  - B. *The Passion Narrative (18-19)*
  - C. *Jesus' Resurrection and Appearances, Commissioning of Disciples (20:1-29)*
  - D. *Concluding Purpose Statement (20:30-31)*
- IV. **EPILOGUE: THE COMPLEMENTARY ROLES OF PETER AND THE BELOVED DISCIPLE (21)**
  - A. ***Jesus' Third Appearance, to Seven Disciples in Galilee (21:1-14)***
  - B. ***Jesus and Peter (21:15-19)***
  - C. ***Jesus and the Disciple Jesus Loved (21:20-25)***

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<sup>1</sup> In addition, there is no textual evidence for John's gospel ever being copied without the epilogue. Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 583–586.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 307–308.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. How many indications can you find of God's sovereign oversight in the disciples' fishing excursion (21:1–13)? What seems to have been the purpose of divine intervention in this event?  
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2. Notice the awkwardness as the disciples come ashore (21:12). Why does John point this out to us? What does it tell us about this moment?  
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3. Compare John 21:15–17 with 1 Peter 5:1–3. How did Peter understand his mission, and what does that mean for others entrusted with the care of God's flock?  
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4. Why is it significant that Jesus predicted the manner of Peter's death in 21:18–19?  
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5. Compare John 21:24 with 1 John 1:1–3 and 4:14ff. Why is it significant for the author of this gospel to have been an eyewitness?  
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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

6. What does this passage tell us about Jesus? How does it help us to understand “his place in the sweep of redemptive history”?<sup>3</sup>  
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7. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?  
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8. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?  
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**Review:** *Take a few moments to look back through your study of John's gospel.*

9. What are some passages/topics in John that you found to be particularly challenging?  
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10. What are some passages/topics in John that you found particularly helpful?  
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<sup>3</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 102.