



The Word One to One

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Can you believe it?

John 20

We've reached the point where we see Jesus rise from the dead.

It is a key moment and it's worth considering two questions as we read through chapter 20:



- 1) Did Jesus really rise from the dead?
- 2) What does it mean?

Chapter 20

- ¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.
- ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!'
- ³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb.
- ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.
- ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

Did it really happen?

⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there,

⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped round Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

John provides at least four areas of evidence to show us that Jesus really did rise from the dead:

- Detailed eyewitness accounts
- Comments to show the disciples weren't expecting it
- Proof that it was the same Jesus
- The account of Thomas

What details does John include in vs 1–10 to show us it really happened?

v 1: ...it was still dark

v 2: ...she came running

v 4: Both were running...

v 4: ...the other disciple outran Peter

v 5: He... looked in at the strips of linen lying there

v 7: ...the cloth that had been wrapped round Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place...

This is clear eyewitness testimony – and we've only looked at vs 1–10 so far!

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb

¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?' 'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.'

¹⁴ At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?' 'Thinking he was the gardener,' she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell

me where you have put him, and I will get him.'

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher').

¹⁷ Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' "

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her.

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'

²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'

²² And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'

²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in

his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

²⁸ Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

How do we know the disciples
were not expecting Jesus to rise?

Mary thinks Jesus' body has been taken...

v 2b: 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!'

v 13: 'They have taken my lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.'

The disciples don't understand what's going on.

v 9: They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

Mary thinks Jesus is a gardener

v 15

Thomas was clearly not expecting Jesus to rise either!

So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.' **v 25**

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped round Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher').

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her.

²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

How are we shown that this is Jesus who has been physically raised? i.e. this isn't a body swap or a look-alike

✓ 1 Mary: 'the stone had been removed'

✓ 5 Peter and 'the other disciple': 'He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there'

✓ 7 'The cloth was still lying in its place'

✓ 16 Mary: 'Teacher'

✓ 18 'I have seen the Lord!'

✓ 20 The disciples: '...he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.'

What further proof is given in the account of Thomas?

People sometimes doubt that this was the same Jesus who had been crucified... but He has holes in His hands and side to prove it!

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

²⁸ Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'

John gives clear, eyewitness testimony of the events of Jesus' resurrection. If we don't accept it, how do we explain it?

If we suggest that Jesus hadn't really died, but rather 'come round' in the tomb, then you would have to believe that:

- The experienced Roman executioners had failed at their job – and by doing so risked being killed themselves!
- The blood and water from Jesus' side (which is medical evidence of death) hadn't flowed.
- Joseph and Nicodemus did not spot that Jesus was still alive as they embalmed him!!
- Without food and water and after brutal bodily treatment, including being speared, he had simply come round and recovered.
- He was then strong enough to roll the vast boulder back up the hill away from the tomb entrance on his own.
- He then escaped without the guards noticing, or he overpowered them!
- He then convinced his disciples that he had risen!

That would take a lot more belief than trusting John's account – wouldn't it?

How else would you explain the empty tomb and the disciples' growing belief?

- The Romans had nothing to gain from stealing the body, nor had the Jews. They both wanted him dead.

If they had stolen the body they could have rubbished all talk of Jesus' resurrection just by producing the corpse!

- The disciples had nothing to gain from stealing the body either.

All of them give their lives to telling people that Jesus has risen, and all but one dies a horrific death defending this truth! If this was a hoax, surely at least one of them would have 'blown the whistle'?

They are fearful, they were not expecting the resurrection, they had given up on Jesus... so, this could not have been make-belief caused by wishful thinking.



What does it mean?

⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

● Psalm 16 v 10: '...because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.'

● Isaiah 53 v 11: 'After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.'

¹⁷ Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."'

Jesus explains the meaning of His resurrection, bit by bit, to His disciples.

Verse 9 shows that the disciples didn't yet understand what the resurrection was all about.

What does John mean when he says the 'Scripture' in v 9?

True understanding of Jesus' resurrection will come as we understand the Old Testament better. v 17 shows that Mary still had lots to learn!

What does Jesus mean when He tells Mary 'Do not hold on to me'?

- First – Jesus' command to Mary means that His physical work on earth is finished. You could paraphrase this: 'Don't treat me as if I've still got work to do down here – I've finished it, now let me go to My Father.'
- Secondly – Jesus' message to His disciples means that His work is accomplished!



- Thirdly – Jesus' language about membership in God's family means that His work really is finished – because as promised in John 1 v 12 – Jesus has brought us into God's family:

'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God'.

Jesus' work really has been done – now He can say: '...my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' **v 17**

This all makes sense of what Jesus has said before:

John 16 vs 26,27:

'In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.'

So after the death and resurrection of Jesus, full and free access is available to the family of God. We can have 'the right' to be in His family.

We shouldn't fall into the trap of thinking that there is more for Jesus to do here on earth in order for us to be part of His family. It's not about new miracles or signs, or extra work by a new group of priests in religious buildings, offering fresh sacrifices. Jesus' death on the cross has done it all; there is nothing more that He or we need to do!!

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'

²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'

²² And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'

Jesus continued patiently to explain the meaning of His resurrection.

Jesus says, 'Peace be with you!'

Why is this so significant?

Remember Jesus' earlier words to His disciples in the Upper Room:

John 14 v 27: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.'

John 16 v 33: 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'

What is Jesus now offering?

With sins forgiven by the crucified, risen Jesus... peace with God is now available! **v 19,21**

And what does it mean that Jesus breathes on them and tells them they are receiving the Spirit?

The Holy Spirit comes on the disciples 40 days later at an event called Pentecost (we read this in the book of Acts).

But just like when Jesus washed their feet to show what would happen at the cross, so Jesus breathing on them is a picture of what will happen at Pentecost.

This is a picture to show that after the cross and resurrection – as forgiven and clean people – the disciples can now receive the Holy Spirit.

²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

John 14 vs 25,26: 'All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.'

John 16 vs 12-15: 'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.'

What does Jesus mean in v 23?

Do you remember that Jesus promised that when the Spirit came to the Apostles He would teach them all things and remind them of everything Jesus has said?

This is the key to understanding the Apostles 'forgiving sins'. Of course, only Jesus can forgive sins, but as the Apostles share the gospel of Jesus, the Spirit-inspired word has power to enable the forgiveness of our sins.

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

²⁸ Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

This final part of Jesus' explanation comes as He appears to Thomas.

What is Thomas's main problem?

He won't believe the word of the Apostles. Unless he sees Jesus, he won't believe that Jesus has risen.

What does Thomas do when he sees Jesus?

He believes! **▽ 28**

Do we believe the word of the Apostles?

If we do, Jesus says we are blessed. **▽ 29**

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have (life) in his name.

Summary

What have we seen?

The resurrection really did happen... there were eyewitnesses... and it was a historic event that the Romans and Jews could not disprove!

This means:

- 1) Jesus' work is finished – therefore we are not to cling to him... but love Him – the Creator God!
- 2) Peace with God is now possible – through the Apostles' teaching about Jesus.
- 3) We should not doubt Jesus! The word of the Apostles should be trusted, and we are blessed if we believe it!
- 4) He is Lord – and Thomas showed us the right response – 'My Lord and my God'.

Why did John write all of this down?

So that we might believe in Jesus **v 31**

As we believe in Jesus, what happens?

We have life in His name! **vs 30,31**

John 20

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!' ³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped round Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. ¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³ They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?' 'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' ¹⁴ At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ He asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?' Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.' ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher'). ¹⁷ Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and

your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her. ¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.' ²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.' ²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' ²⁸ Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' ³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Next time...

Now what?

Feed the world...

John 21

Throughout John's Gospel each time we have seen a miracle happen it has been followed by the word (or explanation).

We don't need to guess what the miracle means - Jesus tells us!

So what should we expect in this final miracle? The same!

And that's what we find:

Verses 1-14 - The miracle

Verses 15-19 - The word of explanation

Chapter 21

- ¹ Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way:
- ² Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together.
- ³ 'I'm going out to fish,' Simon Peter told them, and they said, 'We'll go with you.' So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.
- ⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus.
- ⁵ He called out to them, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered.

⁶ He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, 'It is the Lord,' he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.

⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred metres.

⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.'

¹¹ So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

¹² Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord.

¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'

The miracle

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'

¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.'

¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, 'Follow me!'

There have been any number of 'guesses' about what this miracle means.

Some have suggested there is significance in the number of fish (153).

Others have said Jesus is reminding His disciples of a previous occasion when He told them to 'fish for men' - the trouble is that this wasn't recorded by John in John's Gospel - it is in the other Gospels!

The Key to understanding the miracle lies in the words that follow it, which explain it!

What does Jesus do and teach in verses 15-19?

- In catching a large number of fish He feeds the Apostles!
- They have breakfast together.

What then is His word (command) to His Apostles?

'Feed my lambs.' v 15

What does this mean?

Jesus often talked about sheep/ lambs.

Remember John 10 v 11: 'I am the good shepherd'

and John 10 v 27: 'My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.'



People who love and follow Jesus are 'sheep' – and He is the Good Shepherd.

Jesus wants the Apostles to feed (teach) us with His word.

v 15: 'Feed my lambs.'

v 16: 'Take care of my sheep.'

v 17: 'Feed my sheep.'

v 19: 'Follow me!'

It seems likely, then, that this miracle is a 'feeding' miracle rather than a 'fishing' miracle. Jesus feeds His discouraged and deflated disciples and then re-commissions them to feed others.

- The miracle of the catch was purely for the benefit of the Apostles – to underline Jesus' position as the one who will provide for them when they go out to feed others.

Jesus didn't need the catch – He already had breakfast on the go!

v 9: 'When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.'

- They were back at the Sea of Tiberias, which is another name for the Sea of Galilee...

The Apostles have headed back to the Sea of Galilee to be fishermen. We originally encountered them here at the Sea of Galilee in chapter 1. The risen Jesus comes to find them and re-employ them!

- John, as ever, gives us lots of details so we know we can trust the account. The location, the time, and even the number of large fish!

If it is a sending out of the disciples for service, what do we learn about Peter and John at this foundation stage of the church?

Lets turn over and have a look...

Peter

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'

How was Peter's morale and reputation at the end of chapter 18?

Peter could not have been at a lower state. He had just failed Jesus by denying Him three times.

So what do we find Jesus asking Peter in vs 15-17?

✓ 15: 'Do you love me more than these?'

✓ 16: 'Do you love me?'

✓ 17: 'Do you love me?'

How does Peter respond?

✓ 15: 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'

✓ 16: 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.'

✓ 17: 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.'

Note that Peter is asked the same question three times! This is a deliberate re-commissioning – a reversal of Peter's three denials.

Just like the miracle of the fish, where it was not the skill of the fishermen that made the catch, but rather Jesus who filled the nets to overflowing...

Here it will not be in Peter's strength or skill that makes him useful to God, but it is Jesus who now empowers him to do God's work of building the church!

So, from being rock bottom... and a feeling of total despair... to the entrusted leader of God's church on earth...

We (the sheep) will be fed by Jesus – through the Apostles – led by Peter:

Verse 15 – 'Feed my lambs.'

Verse 16 – 'Take care of my sheep.'

Verse 17 – 'Feed my sheep.'

So Peter is commissioned...

What things happened to lead up to this point?

He was given a new name: Cephas – meaning 'the rock'! chapter 1 v 42

He was promised the Holy Spirit would come and 'teach [him] all things.' chapter 14 v 26

'the Spirit of Truth ... will testify about me [Jesus].' chapter 15 v 26

'You [Apostles] also must testify [about Jesus].' chapter 15 v 27

'the Spirit of Truth ... will guide you into all the truth.' chapter 16 v 13

So what does Jesus mean by 'feed my sheep'?

The Holy Spirit has given the Apostles the truth of God. They are now to pass this on to others. This is what 'feed my sheep' means – it's teaching people God's Word, the Bible. Clearly Peter has been put in pole position as the first leader of the church.

The priority for Jesus is that the whole world hears His word. (Remember John 10 v 27: 'my sheep listen to my voice'.)

It's all about God's word spreading...

Historical evidence shows that Christianity grew within the Roman Empire by 40 per cent each decade from AD 40 to AD 350. This happened despite the authorities trying in every way to crush, suppress and wipe out the early church.

By the time of the emperor Constantine (around AD 307) 33 million people had become Christians – that's 56 per cent of the Empire!

How did this massive growth happen?

- People heard the word from the Apostles' teaching.
- The Spirit of Truth empowered it.

Christian growth happens when it is based on the teaching of the Apostles in the Gospels.

So as we look for a church, we need to ask ourselves: 'Is the Bible being taught? Is the same gospel being explained, as taught by the Holy Spirit to the Apostles?'

¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.'

¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, 'Follow me!'

What is amazing in verse 18?

Jesus knows exactly what will happen to Peter. He knows Peter will be martyred.

Why is this helpful for us?

Jesus stops us from worrying that something has gone horribly wrong with the project when we see Peter killed! Jesus knew... it was all part of His plan.

(History tells us that Peter was crucified upside down by the Romans.)

Some Christians suggest that the way Peter 'feeds the sheep' is through communion... and by the clergy of the church somehow being connected to Peter through an unbroken succession of one generation of clergy laying hands of consecration on the next generation... the clergy then distribute bread and 'feed' the sheep.

There are big problems here! Not least that in John's Gospel there is no record of the Lord's Supper or Communion! It seems hardly likely that this is what Jesus is referring to when he says 'feed my sheep'...

It is much more likely that he has in mind a word-based ministry - not a religious act of laying on of hands - one to another from the line of Peter!

...Especially when we remember the sheep/shepherd language of John 10:

The true sheep of Jesus' flock hear his voice!

(Remember, also, that in our study of John chapter 6, we saw that Jesus used the bread as a picture to speak of faith in Him, not literally to speak of the Lord's Supper.)

²⁰ Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is going to betray you?')

²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?'

²² Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.'

John

In vs 20-25, the focus shifts to John - the writer of the Gospel.

Why does John record this incident?

John gives us this detail to set the record straight and 'rubbish' what was clearly an early rumour... which probably had grown seeing as how he was the only one to reach old age.

What does verse 24 tell

us about John's account?

It's true! John has written an accurate, eyewitness account.


Did John record everything that happen?

No! At a time when everything was written on expensive papyrus, John says he couldn't record everything, it would be too big a job.

²³ Because of this, the rumour spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?'

²⁴ This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. **We know that his testimony is true.**

²⁵ Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.



Summary

Jesus' priority is the 'feeding of his sheep', so that they might have life. This is the teaching of his word.

John 20 vs 30,31:

'Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.'

John 21

¹ Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ 'I'm going out to fish,' Simon Peter told them, and they said, 'We'll go with you.' So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. ⁵ He called out to them, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered. ⁶ He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. ⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, 'It is the Lord,' he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred metres. ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' ¹¹ So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.' ¹⁶ Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.' ¹⁷ The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.' ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, 'Follow me!' ²⁰ Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is going to betray you?') ²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?' ²² Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.' ²³ Because of this, the rumour spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?' ²⁴ This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.



Questions to think through:

How have these notes changed your view of who Jesus is?

- As the Christ, the Son of God?

How have these studies helped you to understand what it means to 'have life in his name' (John 20 v 31)?

Do you now understand God's grace and truth? (God's riches at Christ's expense)

John 1 v 14: 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.'

Has Jesus changed your thinking and your heart as we have studied His Word, so that you belong in God's family?

John 1 v 12: 'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God'.

Could you now write your own name in that same verse from chapter 1 v 12:

To who did receive him, to who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

We bring nothing... the God of creation has done everything we need... our part is simply to accept His free gift. We do this by acknowledging our sin, saying sorry for it, and turning to Jesus as our Saviour. You can do this right now! Here is a prayer you may like to say:

Lord Jesus Christ, I present myself to You now.
I know I have sinned in my thoughts, words and actions.
I know I need Your forgiveness and I am truly sorry.
Thank You that You came from heaven to save me by dying on the cross for me. Thank You that You rose from the dead for eternity.
I know that I cannot do anything to earn Your forgiveness - You have done it all at the cross.

As best as I understand, I gratefully give my life back to You, asking for Your forgiveness and Your acceptance. I turn from my sin.

Now I ask You to please come into my life as I trust You alone to save me.

Come in as my Saviour to cleanse me.

Come in as my Lord and be in charge of my life.

Come in as my Friend to be with me.

Please send the Holy Spirit to live inside me and make me a child in Your family.

I pray this in Jesus' name,

Amen!

John 1 v 4: In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

John 3 vs 16,17: For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 6 v 35: Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'