

EXPLANATION OF 43RD BIBLEBOOK

JOHN 21 (A.D. 70-95)

INTRODUCTION

In John chapter 21 Jesus appears to seven of his disciples at the Sea of Galilee and restores the position of Peter as apostle.

The writer closes his Gospel with a united testimony of a group of people with respect to the reliability of the things recorded in the Gospel of John.

AUTHOR AND PURPOSE

The author of John chapter 21.

- a. People who think that the author of chapter 21 was not the apostle John.
- b. People who think that the author of chapter 21 was the apostle John.

The purpose of John chapter 21.

- a. Living with the resurrected Lord (21:1-14).
- b. The disciples remain fishers of men (21:15-17).
- c. Peter remains a shepherd (21:15-17).
- d. Life and death are predestined (21:18-19).
- e. Removal of the misunderstanding with regard to John (21:20-23).
- f. The elders at Ephesus give an official testimony (21:24-25)

OUTLINE

(I) 21:1-14. The 7th appearance to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee.

- a. The first miracle: The great catch of fish from the sea (21:1-11).
- b. The second miracle: the multiplication of fish and bread on the shore (21:12-14).

(II) Other appearances of Jesus after his resurrection.

- a. The 8th appearance on a mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20).
The great commission in the Gospel of Matthew.
- b. The 9th appearance to more than 500 brothers at the same time (1 Corinthians 15:6).
- c. The 10th appearance to James, the brother of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:7).
- d. The 11th appearance to all the apostles before his ascension (1 Corinthians 15:7; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:1-5)
- e. The 12th appearance to all the apostles at his ascension (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-12)
- f. The 13th appearance to Paul after his ascension (Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-21; 26:1-32; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8)

(III) 21:15-17. **Jesus Christ restores Peter in his office as apostle.**

- a. Peter's denial is turned into Peter's confession.
- b. Peter's boasting is turned into Peter's humility.
- c. Peter is restored in his mission.

(IV) 21:18-19. Jesus predicts the death of Peter.

- a. Jesus made a prediction about the death of Peter.
- b. Jesus taught Peter to follow him in every circumstance of life.

(V) 21:20-23. Jesus removes the misunderstanding regarding John.

- a. Jesus denounces inquisitiveness with regard to future events.
- b. Jesus emphasised that discipleship was more important than knowledge.
- c. John still lived when the Gospel of John was written.

(VI) 21:24-25. The elders at Ephesus give an official testimony with regard to the trustworthiness of the Gospel of John.

- a. The testimony of a group of known people (21:24).
- b. The closing statement by one these persons (21:25).

EXPLANATION

The author of John chapter 21.

a. People who think that the author of chapter 21 was not the apostle John.

The following facts give the impression that the author of chapter 21 was not the apostle John:

- John 20:30-31 gives the impression that the Gospel ends here.
- In the first 20 chapters the author never mentions himself or his family members by name (cf. 1:35-41; 13:23; 18:15; 19:25-27,35; 20:2-10). But in John 21:2 he speaks about 'the sons of Zebedee' (the father of James and John).
- John 21:20 gives a long explanation who 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' was. In the first 20 chapters the author always indirectly refers to the apostle John (1:35,40; 19:26; 20:2).
- John 21:24-25 gives the impression that one person in a group of people ("we" or "I") possibly recorded chapter 21.
- Only in chapter 21 do we read that Nathanael came from Cana in Galilee (21:2; cf. 1:45).

b. People who think that the author of chapter 21 was the apostle John.

- With the exception of John 21:24-25 there is nothing in the vocabulary or grammar of John chapter 21 that suggests that the apostle John could not be the author of John chapter 21.
- The words 'After these things' (21:1) are also found in chapter 1 to 20 (5:1).
- 'The Sea of Galilee' is also called 'the Sea of Tiberias' in chapter 1 to 20 (6:1; 21:1).
- The three disciples: Peter, Thomas and Nathanael (21:2) are also mentioned in chapter 1 to 20.
- The boat called 'ploion' (21:6) or 'ploiarion' (21:8) is also called that in chapter 1 to 20 (6:17-20,22).
- 'The disciple whom Jesus loved' (21:7,20) is also mentioned in chapter 1 to 20 (13:23; 19:26; 20:2).

- The words: “Jesus came and took the bread and the fish” (21:13, singular) are also found in chapter 1 to 20 (6:11, plural).
- The words: “This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead” (21:14) can only have significance next to John 20:19,26.
- The double: ‘Amen, amen’ (‘I tell you the truth’) (21:18) also occur in chapter 1 to 20 (1:51; 3:3,5)

The purpose of John chapter 21.

John chapter 21 was from the beginning a part of the Gospel of John. Why was it added after the beautiful closing statement in John 20:30-31? The addition of chapter 21 serves a couple of purposes.

a. Living with the resurrected Lord (21:1-14).

- The disciples had to learn to live with the reality that Jesus Christ is now the resurrected Lord. The disciples had to learn to live in the invisible presence of the Lord after they had lived for three years in his visible presence! Jesus appeared suddenly to his disciples in order to serve them with his loving care. “Jesus stood at the shore, but his disciples did not realize that it was Jesus” (21:4).
- The disciples had to learn to trust that Jesus Christ knew what was the best thing to do. “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some (fish)” (21:6).
- The disciples had to learn that obedience leads to unimaginable abundance. “When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish” (21:6).
- The disciples had to learn that Jesus supplies them with what they need (fish)¹. “When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it” (21:9).
- The disciples had to learn that their weak nets would not tear. “It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn” (21:11).

b. The disciples remain fishers of men (21:15-17).

Jesus Christ reminds his disciples that they had been called to be fishers of men² and that they should remain fishers of men. Now that Jesus had been raised from the dead they could resume their calling to extend the Kingdom of God. “Feed my lambs! Take care of my sheep! Feed my sheep!”

c. Peter remains a shepherd (21:15-17).

Jesus Christ clarifies that he had restored Peter after Peter had denied the Lord. Before the crucifixion Peter had denied Jesus three times. Now after the resurrection Jesus affirmed Peter three times as shepherd of his sheep. It is possible that there were Christians who questioned whether Jesus Christ would entrust such an important task as ‘shepherd’ to someone who had sinned so grossly.

d. Life and death are predestined (21:18-19).

Jesus Christ teaches that the life of Peter and John on earth is predestined. The death by which Peter would glorify the Lord was predetermined!

e. Removal of the misunderstanding with regard to John (21:20-23).

Jesus says that it is not Peter’s business to know what would happen to John in the future. Some Christians thought that Jesus had said that John would not die. But he had said that it was not Peter’s business to know whether John would remain living until the Lord’s return.

f. The elders at Ephesus give an official testimony (21:24-25)

(I) 21:1-14. The 7th appearance to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee.

The third time Jesus appeared to his disciples as a group was when seven of them were fishing in the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee. There he met Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John and two other disciples. He performed two miracles: causing a great catch of fish from the sea (21:1-11) and multiplying the fish and bread on the shore (21:12-14). Both these miracles of multiplication have the features of ‘a sign’, that is, of *a miracle with a message* about Jesus Christ. The readers are given the impression that there is more than meets the eye, and the inner significance is unfolded in the rest of the chapter. The miracles were parables of the missionary activity of the disciples in the time that lay ahead!

¹ cf. Matthew 6:25

² Matthew 4:19

a. The first miracle: The great catch of fish from the sea (21:1-11).

21:1. After these things Jesus manifested (appeared)³ (viaa) himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias; now he appeared⁴ (viaa) as follows.

21:2. There were (viia) together⁵ Simon Peter and Thomas, the one called (vppp) Didimus (the ‘twin’), and Nathanael, the one from Cana in Galilee, and the (sons) of Zebedee (James and John) and two others of his disciples.

21:3. Simon Peter said (vipa) to them, “I am going (vipa) to fish (vnpa).” They said (vipa) to him: “We are going (vipn) with you.” They went (viaa) and got in (viaa) into the boat, but in that night they caught (viaa) nothing.

21:4. Now when it was (vpad) already early morning⁶ (i.e the day was breaking) Jesus stood (viaa) on the shore, but the disciples were unaware (know by intuition or reflection)⁷ (vila) that it was (vipa) Jesus.

21:5. Jesus then said (vipa) to them: “Children (i.e. fellows, lads), you don’t have (vipa) anything eatable (i.e. to eat) (do you)?” They answered (viao) him. “No.”

21:6. So he said (viaa) to them: “Cast (vmaa) your net on the right side of the boat and you will certainly find (vifa) (fish). Then they cast (viaa)(the net) and were no longer able (had no strength)(viia) to draw (vnaa) it (the net) due to the large number of fish.

21:7. Then the disciple whom Jesus kept loving⁸ (viia) said (vipa) to Peter: “It is (vipa) the Lord!” Simon Peter, hearing (vpaa) that it was (vipa) the Lord, tied (viam) his outer garment around himself, because he was (viia) undressed (naked, stripped, wearing only a loin cloth), and flung (viaa) himself into the Sea.

21:8. But the other disciples came (viaa) by boat, because they were (viia) not far from the land – only about two hundred cubits (about 90 meter) – dragging (vppa) the net of fish.

21:9. Then when they got out (disembarked)(viaa) onto the land they saw (vipa) a charcoal fire readymade (laid) (vppn) and a fish lying on (vppn) it and a flatbread (like a pancake).

21:10. Jesus said (vipa) to them: “Bring⁹ (vmaa) some of the fish which you just caught (viaa).”

21:11. Simon Peter embarked (viaa) and hauled (viaa) the net onto the shore, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were (vppa) so many¹⁰, the net was not torn (viap).

The 7th appearance of Jesus to seven of his disciples (21:1-4). The word ‘appear’ means that Jesus Christ showed (revealed) his presence and glory. His disciples could really see him. He appeared to them in order to prove to them that he was continuing to care for them with love and power¹¹.

Jesus deliberately allowed his disciples and other followers to really see and recognise him. Other people would probably not have recognised him. His appearances were not that of a ghost or spirit. They were not hallucinations, visions, dreams or inventions, but real physical appearances! When he appeared, they could see him. What they saw was the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ with a body of flesh and bones¹², a physical body, but no longer bound to the laws of space and time of this present creation.

At the last Passover meal¹³ and after his resurrection Jesus had predicted that his disciples would be scattered, but that he would meet them in Galilee¹⁴. Four of these seven disciples belonged to the first disciples of Jesus: Peter, Nathanael, James and John (1:35-51).

We cannot rule out that these men, after being scattered, returned to their original homes and occupations in order to gain a livelihood. They were no longer occupied with their calling and task in the Kingdom of God and had given up being fishers of men.

Some of them had been fishermen and so they went fishing again in the Sea of Galilee (the Lake of Gennesaret or the Sea of Tiberias). The best time to fish was at night. And so history repeated itself. Just as in Luke 5:1-11, these disciples battled all through the night to catch fish, but caught nothing! It is possible that their night-long failure was a revelation of God’s displeasure with them for having neglected their kingdom-work. Nevertheless, God still loved them!

Peter took the initiative. He was the man of action.

The reason they did not recognize Jesus is not mentioned. They were close enough (21:8). It could have been caused by the morning mist or it could have been a sovereign decision of Jesus¹⁵.

³ G: phaneroó

⁴ G: phaneroó

⁵ G: homou

⁶ G: próia

⁷ G: oida

⁸ G: agapaó

⁹ G: pheroó, énegka

¹⁰ G: tosoutos

¹¹ cf. Matthew 28:20

¹² Luke 24:39

¹³ Matthew 26:32

¹⁴ Matthew 28:7,10; Mark 16:3

¹⁵ cf. Luke 24:16

The miracle of the great catch of fish from the sea (21:5-8). Jesus used a general expression of familiarity: ‘children’. It has the modern sense of ‘boys’ (cf. 4:46)¹⁶.

Jesus was not asking a question, but making a statement: “You have been working all night and have caught nothing. Isn’t it?” “You have nothing to eat, isn’t it?” He focused their attention on their old profession (to catch fish) and remarked that they had failed! The disciples had to admit failure.

Jesus knew that they had caught nothing, but still he asked this question in order to rivet their attention on the fact that *their return to their former occupation has been a complete failure*. The disciples had not reckoned sufficiently with God’s plan for their lives: that Jesus had chosen them, called them, equipped them and sent them to catch men ¹⁷ ! It was as if Jesus was saying to his disciples, “Without me you can do nothing (15:5)” Jesus Christ wanted his disciples to learn this lesson once for all: Without the Lord Jesus Christ, they could do nothing, but with him, his extraordinary plan for their lives would be fulfilled!

Together with Jesus Christ everything in their life would change! Their profession and their ministry had ended in a failure! But together with Jesus they would have tremendous results (21:6)! Their personal need for food (fish) had not been met, but Jesus Christ would prepare a meal for them (21:9).

The response of the disciples (admitting failure) was very unusual. Experienced fishermen usually do not permit a perfect stranger to give them directions and especially not about a trade which they had practised all their lives! Moreover this stranger was standing on the shore and could not see whether there were fishes in the water near the boat.

But this time the disciples did not say what they said in Luke 5:5, “We have worked all night and haven’t caught anything.” The voice of the stranger was so convincing and compelling that they immediately obeyed. They cast the net out on starboard and immediately enclosed a great number of fish. Although they kept pulling, they were not able to drag the net ashore. They caught so many fish that they continually struggled without success (imperfect tense) to haul the catch into the boat. They had to tow the net to the shore.

This was a miracle. Jesus did not create this school of fish, but knew in a sovereign way where the fish were at that moment. Jesus wanted to open the eyes of the disciples so that they would realise that they could not see the reality of things without Jesus. And he wanted to strengthen their faith in him so that would realise that without him they could do nothing. In exactly the same sovereign way Jesus knows where the people are whom his labourers would catch. He knows in a sovereign way where the open doors and open hearts are¹⁸.

Jesus again and again enters into the specific circumstances of our lives and gives us again and again a new task and a new hope for our lives! When he closes one door, he always opens another door¹⁹. And when he finishes one chapter of our lives, he begins to write another chapter²⁰.

John and Peter were often together (1:35-41; 13:23-24; 18:15-16; 20:1-10; 21:2,7,20-22)²¹. The man of vision (John) and the man of action (Peter) complemented one another in God’s Kingdom. Again John was quicker in recognising that it was Jesus (cf. 20:8). And once again Peter acted impulsively and faster than John (cf. 20:6).

Peter was probably clad in his under garment or loincloth. For the sake of modesty and reverence he put on his outer garment. He girded himself by pulling it up and tying it with his belt. Then he jumped into the water, because he wanted to be the first to reach Jesus. The bottom was shallow near the coast and so he could wade to the shore.

Jesus already had fish on the fire and flatbread (21:9). The other disciples followed in the boat and towed the net full of large fishes to the shore. When they landed they saw a fire of burning coals with titbits of fish lying on it as well as a flatbread. Although the indefinite words ‘fish’ and ‘flatbread’ could mean ‘fishes’ and ‘several flatbread’ in the collective sense, they could also mean ‘one fish’ and ‘one flatbread’. If this is the case, then there is a strong resemblance between John 21:13 (one flatbread and one fish) with John 6:11 (five flatbread and two fishes) and this could indicate another miracle of multiplication.

Jesus wanted his disciples to realise how large the catch of fish was (21:10-11). Jesus intended to say: “Bring of the fish which *you* have just caught, otherwise we would not have enough to eat.” He wanted the disciples to bring only the big fishes out of the net, so that they could see the miracle of the great catch, realise how great the miracle was and what the spiritual meaning of this miracle was.

Peter loosened one end of the net from the boat and pulled the net with the help of the other disciples onto the shore. When they had taken all the large fishes out of the net (and had thrown the small fishes back into the sea in order to continue to grow) they counted 153 fishes.

The Bible does not ascribe any allegorical or symbolical meaning to the number of fish. If there was any symbolic meaning attached to this number, it must bear some relation to the subject matter in the context. It probably pointed to

¹⁶ 1 John 2:13,18

¹⁷ Mark 3:14; Matthew 4:19; 28:19; John 17:18; 20:21

¹⁸ Colossians 4:2-4

¹⁹ Revelation 3:7-8

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 3:2-3

²¹ Acts 3:1-16; 4:1,13,19; 8:14; Luke 22:8; Galatians 2:9

the fact that the disciples would make a great catch of new believers in Jesus Christ through their preaching and teaching²².

If there was any symbolic meaning attached to the fact that the net did not tear, it must mean that 'the gospel net' would never tear, no matter how many converts it catches! An uncountable number of people will come into God's Kingdom²³!

If there was any symbolic meaning attached to the fact that the disciples could not haul the great catch of fish into Peter's boat, it simply means that no fold is large enough to accommodate all the sheep in the Good Shepherd's flock²⁴. *No congregation is large enough to accommodate all the Christian converts coming into God's Kingdom in any area in this world!* All Christian congregations (churches) need one another in order to accomplish the great commission!

b. The second miracle: the multiplication of fish and bread on the shore (21:12-14).

21:12. Jesus said (vipa) to them: "Come (vmaa), take breakfast (vmaa)(imperatives)." None of his disciples dared (viia) to ask (inquire)²⁵ (vnaa) him: "Who are (vipa) you?" They knew (by intuition and reflection)²⁶ (vpra) that it was (vipa) the Lord.

21:13. Jesus came (vipn), took (vipa) the flatbread and gave (vipa) to them; and in the same way the fish.

21:14. This (was) already the third time that Jesus appeared (viap) to his disciples after he was raised²⁷ (vpap) from the dead.

The words fish and flatbread are singular (21:13). On the one hand, if the words 'fish' and 'flatbread' in verse 9 and verse 13 are regarded as collectively referring to more than one fish and more than one bread-cake, then this passage does not describe a miracle, but simply an ordinary breakfast. People, who hold this view, usually refer to the fact that Jesus asked the disciples to bring some of the fish they had just caught.

On the other hand, if the words 'fish' and 'bread' are singular, as they definitely are in verse 13, then it means that what Jesus gave to them did not come from the fish, which they had caught! Then this passage describes a second miracle of multiplying bread and fish!

The miracle of multiplying the fish and bread. In John chapter 6, Jesus Christ performed a miracle and fed five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves of bread (five pieces of flatbread) and two titbits of fish²⁸. Here Jesus Christ invited seven hungry men to come and have breakfast with him from one flatbread and one titbit of fish, which he himself had provided before they had landed and which did not come from what the disciples had caught. When the disciples arrived on the shore they saw that Jesus had already made a fire, that there was one fish on the fire and also one flatbread (cf. 21:9). Jesus invited his disciples to eat the breakfast he had prepared for them. Just as in John 6:11 Jesus multiplied the amount of that one fish and one flatbread to feed them all! The fact that it is not mentioned that Jesus prayed before the meal does not mean that he did not do it²⁹. According to custom, the father of a family takes bread, gives a prayer of thanks, breaks it and passes pieces to the members of the family.

Once more Jesus performed a miracle. In a sovereign way he multiplied one flatbread, the size of a pancake, and one titbit of fish so that it became a breakfast for all his hungry disciples! The purpose of this miracle of multiplication was also twofold: The first purpose was to remind the disciples that they had a calling and mission to fulfil, namely, not to be occupied with their former occupation, but to proclaim the gospel and to make disciples in all the nations. The second purpose was to remind them that it is always the Lord Jesus Christ who multiplies the numbers of converts and who gives spiritual growth!

The third appearance of Jesus to his disciples as a group. *During these forty days Jesus did not appear to his enemies, but only to his followers: "God caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen"³⁰! He appeared to people who would become his eye-witnesses.* This was the third appearance of Jesus to his disciples as a group (20:19-23; 20:24-29).

(II) Other appearances of Jesus after his resurrection.

²² Matthew 4:19; 24:14)

²³ Revelation 5:9-10; 7:9

²⁴ John 10:3-16

²⁵ G: exetazó

²⁶ G: oida

²⁷ G: egeiró

²⁸ John 6:11

²⁹ cf. 1 Timothy 4:4-5

³⁰ Acts 10:40-41. "God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen - by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."

Luke writes in Acts 1:3, “(the disciples) to whom he presented³¹ (viaa) himself being alive (vppa) after his suffering (vnaa), by many demonstrative (convincing) proofs (evidence)³² for forty days showing himself (letting himself be seen, not in the sense of a vision)³³ (vppn), and speaking (vppa) to them the things concerning the kingdom of God.”

The Bible records five more appearances of Jesus Christ before his ascension into heaven.

a. The 8th appearance on a mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20).

Jesus also met eleven of his disciples as a group on a mountain on Galilee. During the last Passover meal on Thursday evening, Jesus had predicted, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered’. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee”.

Also after his resurrection, the angel said to the women at the tomb, “Go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him’³⁴. And in Matthew 28:16-20 we read how Jesus indeed appeared to his disciples on a mountain in Galilee.

But on which mountain in Galilee did he meet his disciples? It was most probably the same mountain where he proclaimed the Sermon on the Mount³⁵. In the Sermon on the Mount in Galilee Jesus taught his disciples (and many other people) about the Kingdom of God. And on the mountain in Galilee Jesus gave them the great commission, “Go and make new disciples of all the people groups in the world, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and by teaching them to obey all his commandments (and one of these commandments is the great commission)!

It is noteworthy that Jesus entrusted the greatest task in the world (the great commission) to ordinary men and even to some who still doubted in the sense of ‘to doubt in oneself whether one can be or do something, to hesitate’³⁶ (viaa).

Note that the main verb in verse 19 is ‘make disciples’, but that the three participles (go, baptise, teach) are participles with an imperative sense! “All authority (together with power) in heaven and on earth has *once for all* been given (viap) to me. Therefore as you go (vrao), you must make disciples (vmaa) of all nations; baptising (vrpa) them in the one name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and *continually* teaching (vrpa) them to obey (vnpa) all that I have *once for all* commanded (viad) you. And see, I am *continuously* (vipa) with you all the days to the very end of this present world.” Verse 18 describes his authority and power, verse 19 his commission and verse 20 his promise to those who obey. Whoever depends on his authority and power, can fulfil his commission and will continually experience his promised presence!

The authority of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). His authority and power is not limited to heaven, but is since his first coming also effective on the whole earth. His Kingdom (kingship) has been established³⁷. His Kingdom is pressing forward vigorously and vigorous men are eagerly taking possession of it³⁸.

The great commission in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 28:19-20a). His commission was not to wait passively for people who want to be helped, but to take the initiative and go to people.

His commission was not to make converts only, but to make disciples, that is, mature, functioning and persevering believers.

His commission was not only to make disciples of your own people group (e.g. the Jews), but to make disciples of all the people groups in the world.

His commission was not to baptise people with water in any prescribed way, but simply to baptise them (with water)³⁹.

His commission was not to simply teach knowledge about the commandments of Jesus, but to teach people actually to obey those commandments (to put them into practise).

His commission was not limited to his eleven apostles, but was given to all believers who have become disciples of Jesus Christ. The commission was nevertheless given to them first, because they are the foundation of the Christian Church⁴⁰.

³¹ G: paristémi

³² G: tekmeríaon

³³ G: optanomai

³⁴ Matthew 28:7

³⁵ Matthew 4:23; 5:1

³⁶ G: distazó. Matthew 28:17; cf. 14:31

³⁷ cf. Matthew 12:28

³⁸ Matthew 11:12; cf. Revelation 12:5-11,17

³⁹ cf. Mark 1:8

⁴⁰ Matthew 16:18-19; 18:18; Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14

The promise of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:20b). His promise is for believers who carry out his great commission on his authority and trust his power.

b. The 9th appearance to more than 500 brothers at the same time (1 Corinthians 15:6).

The place is not mentioned. In the year A.D. 55 (25 years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ) the apostle Paul wrote about his own conversion about 2 to 4 years after the resurrection of Jesus. It was then that he had heard from other eye-witnesses that Jesus Christ had been resurrected on the third day according to the Scriptures (of the Old Testament) and that he had appeared to many people. Once Jesus appeared to more than 500 people and most of them were still alive when Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthian congregation. During at least one generation after the resurrection of Jesus Christ there were still hundreds of eye-witnesses of his resurrection! That is why Christians spread so quickly to all parts of the world. In one generation Christian congregations had spread all over the Roman Empire (the Middle East, Europe and Africa)!

c. The 10th appearance to James, the brother of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:7).

In the beginning his own brothers did not believe in him (7:3-8). But after his resurrection and appearance to his brother, James, James changed and became the powerful leader of the Jerusalem congregation⁴¹.

d. The 11th appearance to all the apostles before his ascension (1 Corinthians 15:7; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:1-5).

This occasion must have been after Jesus had met them in Galilee, for he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (which happened in Jerusalem).

e. The 12th appearance to all the apostles at his ascension (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-12).

So on the day of his ascension the disciples asked Jesus a final question about the restoration of Israel. While the Old Testament Jews and the New Testament apostles still expected *a Jewish national kingdom of Israel* (Acts 1:6-7; 10:9-16,28,34-35), the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ had already begun *his eternal Kingdom on the whole earth* (Matthew 11:12; 12:28-30; 21:42-44; 24:14)! There will be no restoration of the Old Testament kingdom of Israel, but the believers in Israel during the Old Testament period would be continued and enlarged to include the believers from all the Gentile nations and together form the Kingdom of God (of Christ) (10:16)⁴².

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost the gospel would be proclaimed as a testimony to all the nations: to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth⁴³. Jesus answered their question about the Kingdom and told them that it is not for them to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. His disciples must learn to walk by faith in him who reigns over history and not by calculation of future historical events.

After these words Jesus led his disciples out of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives⁴⁴ in the vicinity of Bethany⁴⁵, blessed them and was taken up before their very eyes. He ascended⁴⁶ to heaven and a cloud hid him from their sight⁴⁶.

f. The 13th appearance to Paul after his ascension (Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-21; 26:1-32; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8).

In about 32-34 A.D. when Paul was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, Jesus Christ appeared to him in a bright light that blinded him for three days⁴⁷ and he heard the voice of Jesus say, "I have *appeared*⁴⁸ to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you⁴⁹." Ananias said, "The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and *to see*⁵⁰ the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth." Paul did not become an apostle of Jesus Christ only because he had seen the Lord Jesus Christ⁵¹, but because he had been chosen, called and sent by the Lord Jesus Christ to be his apostle⁵² and also because he did the things that mark an apostle: signs, wonders and miracles⁵³.

(III) 21:15-17. Jesus Christ restores Peter in his office as apostle.

⁴¹ Galatians 2:9

⁴² Romans 10:12-13; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:2-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 5:9-10

⁴³ Acts 1:8; cf. Matthew 3:2; 4:17,23; 6:10; 7:21; 8:10-12; 12:28-30; 13:24-30,36-43; 16:19,28; 21:42-44; 24:14; Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:24-25; 28:23,31

⁴⁴ Acts 1:12

⁴⁵ Luke 24:50

⁴⁶ Acts 1:9

⁴⁷ Acts 9:1-16

⁴⁸ G: blepó (present)(horaó), opsomai, eidon (2nd aorist of horaó), *óftihén*, heóráka. To see, catch a sight of, passive: to appear

⁴⁹ Acts 26:16 eiden (viaa) and ofthésomai (vifp)

⁵⁰ Acts 22:14 G: *idein* (vnaa)

⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 9:1

⁵² Acts 26:12-18; Galatians 1:1,11-24

⁵³ 2 Corinthians 12:12

21:15. Now when they had eaten breakfast (viaa), Jesus said (vipa) to Simon Peter: “Simon, (son) of John, do you love (agapaó)⁵⁴ (vipa) me more than these (the other disciples)?” He said (vipa): “Yes, Lord, you know (by relationship, reflection and intuition)⁵⁵ (vira) that I like (as a friend) (phileó)⁵⁶ (vipa) you.” He (Jesus) said (vipa): “Feed⁵⁷ (vmpa) my lambs⁵⁸.”

21:16. He said (vipa) to him again a second time.: “Simon, (son) of John, do you love (agapaó)⁵⁹ (vipa) me?” He said (vipa) to him: “Yes, Lord, you know (by relationship, reflection and intuition)⁶⁰ (vira) that I like (phileó)⁶¹ (vipa) you.” He (Jesus) said (vipa): “Shepherd⁶² (vmpa) my (young) sheep⁶³.”

21:17. He said (vipa) to him the third time.: “Simon, (son) of John, do you like (phileó)⁶⁴ (vipa) me?” Peter was grieved (viap) because he said (viaa) to him this third time: “Do you like (phileó)⁶⁵ (vipa)me.” He (Peter) said (vipa) to him: “Lord, you know (by relationship, reflection and intuition)⁶⁶ (vira) all things, you know (realise, understand)(by study, observation and experience)⁶⁷ (vipa) that I like (phileó)⁶⁸ (vipa) you.” Jesus said (vipa) to him: “Feed⁶⁹ (vmpa) my sheep⁷⁰.”

a. Peter’s denial is turned into Peter’s confession.

After the breakfast with the disciples was finished, Jesus Christ turned to Peter in order to publicly in the presence of his disciples re-instate Peter into his office as apostle. He wanted to make known to the whole Church that he had forgiven Peter as well as the other disciples for denying him and for leaving him when he was tried and crucified.

Jesus called Peter by his name ‘Simon’, which he had *before* Jesus gave him the new name ‘Peter’ (which means: rock) (1:42). Jesus thus addressed Peter as a person who did not yet know Jesus!

The circumstances and the words of Jesus had to remind Peter of the scene of his denial. It was at a charcoal fire in a courtyard that Peter had denied Jesus (18:18) and here was another charcoal fire on the beach where he was going to confess his love for Jesus. About ten days before this day, Peter had denied Jesus Christ three times by saying publicly that he did not know Jesus Christ (18:17,25,27). Now he was compelled to acknowledge and confess Jesus Christ three times by saying publicly that Jesus Christ was the Lord he loved. The prediction with reference to Peter’s denial was introduced with the words “I tell you the truth”⁷¹ (13:38) and now the prediction with reference to Peter’s future death is again introduced with these same words (21:18).

In John 13:36-38, Peter had vowed that he would follow Jesus wherever Jesus was going, but Jesus predicted that Peter could not follow him now where he was going (to death, resurrection and ascension into heaven). Peter would follow him later (13:36): also by death (which according to tradition was also by crucifixion). And Peter had vowed that he would lay down his life for Jesus (13:37), but Jesus predicted that Peter would deny him three times (13:38). The order was: to follow, to lay down his life and to deny.

In John 21:15-19, Jesus guided Peter to do the reverse: three times Peter had to confess publicly that he loved Jesus; Jesus predicted how Peter would lay down his life; and finally he exhorted Peter to follow him. Now the order was: to affirm, to lay down his life and to follow.

True discipleship does not happen by following Jesus Christ in the power of the flesh (the human will and human effort). True discipleship will happen when you first affirm that Jesus is your first love⁷² and when you have counted the cost of following Jesus Christ, namely, that you must lay down your life (i.e. take up your cross) every day⁷³.

b. Peter’s boasting is turned into Peter’s humility.

⁵⁴ G: agapaó

⁵⁵ G: oida

⁵⁶ G: phileó

⁵⁷ G: boskó

⁵⁸ G: arnia

⁵⁹ G: apapaó

⁶⁰ G: oida

⁶¹ G: phileó

⁶² G: poimainó

⁶³ G: probation

⁶⁴ G: phileó

⁶⁵ G: phileó

⁶⁶ G: oida

⁶⁷ G: ginóskó

⁶⁸ G: phileó

⁶⁹ G: boskó

⁷⁰ G: probata

⁷¹ G: amén, amén

⁷² Revelation 2:4

⁷³ Luke 9:23; 14:25-30

In Matthew 26:33, Peter had boasted in the presence of all the disciples that even if they all would fall away from Jesus Christ, because they were repelled by what was happening to him, he, Peter, would never fall away! Peter had a completely inflated self-esteem and in pride had placed himself above the other disciples. Therefore it was now quite appropriate for Jesus to ask him if he loved Jesus *more than the other disciples!* Jesus gave Peter a chance to humble himself before the other disciples and make a truthful confession. That is why Peter used the word 'like' (to have the affection of a friend) instead of the word 'love' (self-sacrificially).

Jesus and Peter use two words for 'love' in these verses. The first word (agapaó) means to have a self-sacrificial love with your total personality, feelings and actions for another person⁷⁴ and the second word (phileó) means to have a genuine affection of a friend, especially a subjective feeling of attachment, to the other person⁷⁵. The first time, Jesus literally asked "Do you truly love me with your entire person, with absolute devotion and self-sacrifice more than the other disciples?" But Peter was humbled when he remembered his former denial and saw that Jesus knew everything about him. So he used the other word for love and answered literally, "Yes, Lord, you know that I have a genuine affection of a friend for you." The second time, Jesus once more literally asked, "Do you truly love me with your entire person, with absolute devotion and self-sacrifice?" But Peter still did not dare to affirm that he had this highest kind of love for Jesus Christ. So he answered literally, "Yes, Lord, you know that I have genuine affection of a friend for you." The third time, Jesus Christ descended to the level of Peter and used the same word Peter used for love and literally asked, "Do you have a genuine affection of a friend for me?" Peter was deeply grieved, because it seemed as if Jesus called in question even his subjective attachment to Jesus. Nevertheless, Peter had learned his lesson and remained humble.

He did not dare to appeal to anything in himself anymore. Within his heart, Peter was convinced that he had this humbler kind of love for Jesus Christ and that Jesus was able to realise that. So he answered literally, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I have a genuine affection of a friend for you."

There is no great difference between these two words in the New Testament. God the Father loves the Son⁷⁶. God the Father loves the disciples⁷⁷. Jesus loves his disciples⁷⁸. John was called 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'⁷⁹. The disciples love Jesus⁸⁰. The word 'agapaó' emphasises more the objective love with heart and soul (with your being), mind and strength (with effort and exertion). While the word 'phileó' emphasises more the subjective love with emotions, affections and feelings. Jesus uses the word 'agapaó' the first two times, but 'phileó' the last time.

The Lord 'knows' everything. Only he can look into the heart and knows what is genuine and upright. He knows by relationship, reflection and intuition (G: oida)⁸¹ and also by study, observation and experience (G: ginóskó) that Peter likes him. Peter was hurt because he got the impression that Jesus doubted even his subjective love for Jesus. That is why he said, "Don't you realise by study, observation and experience that I like (emphasising more *the subjective love* with emotions, affections and feelings) you?"

c. Peter is restored in his mission.

Jesus restored Peter in his office as 'shepherd of the sheep of Jesus'. Jesus had already said, "I build my Church on the rock and the gates of hell would not overcome it"⁸². The apostle Peter and the other apostles are the foundation of the historical Church on earth⁸³, but Jesus Christ forever remains the Foundation of the eternal Church⁸⁴. The Church is never 'ours' in the sense that we possess it and have it at our disposal to command. The Church is always the possession of Jesus Christ, his Body⁸⁵, his Flock (10:16)⁸⁶, which he bought with his own blood⁸⁷. The elders of the congregation may never lord it over the members of the congregation⁸⁸, because they are the lambs and sheep of Jesus Christ and never the sheep of the leaders of the congregation⁸⁹!

Three times Jesus repeated his commission to Peter: "Feed (graze) my lambs", "Shepherd my young sheep", and "Feed my sheep." This does not refer to three different groups of believers in the Church, for example, little children, young people and adults. Rather the different terms refer to *the same flock* of the Good Shepherd, but this flock is *viewed from two different aspects*.

⁷⁴ G: agapaó. Mark 12:30-31

⁷⁵ G: phileó

⁷⁶ 3:35 agapaó, 5:20 phileó

⁷⁷ 14:21,23 agapaó, 16:27 phileó

⁷⁸ 13:1 agapaó, 11:3,36 phileó

⁷⁹ 13:23 agapaó, 20:2 phileó

⁸⁰ 14:21,23 agapaó, 16:27 phileó

⁸¹ Mark 12:30

⁸² Matthew 16:18

⁸³ Matthew 18:18; Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14

⁸⁴ Isaiah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:6-8

⁸⁵ Ephesians 1:22-23

⁸⁶ 1 Peter 5:2

⁸⁷ Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19

⁸⁸ Cf. 3 John 9-10

⁸⁹ Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Peter 5:1-4

Jesus views his Church as ‘lambs’ that are small, weak and helpless. Peter must ‘feed’ them with the ‘milk’ of the Word⁹⁰. Jesus also views his Church as ‘sheep’ that are inclined to go astray and prone to wander away from the Shepherd. Peter must ‘shepherd’ them, that is, seek the lost sheep, return those that strayed off, lead them to water and green pastures⁹¹ and protect them from ‘wolves’ (false prophets and false teachers and people who divide the Church). Finally Jesus views his Church as ‘sheep’ that are still immature. Peter must continue to ‘feed’ them with his Word (the Bible), so that they may become strong disciples and equipped workers⁹².

When Peter was weak, Jesus was his Shepherd and Feeder and prayed for him that his faith would not fail. Now that Peter had returned to Jesus it was his turn to shepherd and feed his brothers⁹³! By repeating the task three times he urged Peter not to neglect his God-given commission. His task as a fellow-elder was to be a shepherd of God’s (Christ’s) flock⁹⁴. This is the task of all ‘elders’ in every congregation⁹⁵! Later the apostle Peter remained humble and continued to acknowledge that only Jesus Christ is the Chief-Shepherd⁹⁶ and the Overseer (literally: bishop) of the souls of all believers⁹⁷. The elders in every congregation are never more than under-shepherds under the Chief-Shepherd, Jesus Christ⁹⁸.

⁹⁰ 1 Peter 2:2

⁹¹ Psalm 23

⁹² cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

⁹³ Luke 22:31-32

⁹⁴ Matthew 16:18-19

⁹⁵ 1 Peter 5:1-4

⁹⁶ 1 Peter 5:4; cf. John 10:11-16

⁹⁷ 1 Peter 2:25

⁹⁸ 1 Peter 5:1-4; cf. Ezekiel 34:1-24

(IV) 21:18-19. Jesus predicts the death of Peter.

21:18. “I tell (vipa) you the truth, when you were (viia) younger, you used to gird⁹⁹ (viia) yourself and to walk (viia) where you wished (viia); but when you will have become¹⁰⁰ (vsaa) old, you will stretch out¹⁰¹ (vifa) your hands, and another will gird (vifa) you and bring¹⁰² (vifa) you where you do not wish (vipa)(to go)”.

21:19. This he said (viaa) to signify (vppa) by what kind of death he (Peter) was to glorify (vifa) God. And having said (vpaa) this, he said (vipa) to him: “Follow (vmpa) me!”

In John 21:18-23, Jesus teaches that the events in their lives of those who believe in him on earth are predetermined by God: they are either decided or permitted by him. The events of their lives work for their good¹⁰³. First he made a prediction about how Peter would die. Then he made a prediction that John would still live a long time. Nevertheless, Peter and every believer must follow Jesus Christ in every circumstance!

a. Jesus made a prediction about the death of Peter.

After restoring Peter to his mission, Jesus predicted the physical death of Peter. Jesus said these things about Peter in the year A.D. 30 and at that time Jesus regarded Peter as being older than young, possibly around 40 years of age. Peter was probably older than John.

First, Jesus spoke about Peter when he was younger. At that time Peter was probably quite an independent man, who did what he pleased. “He dressed himself and went where he wanted”. But now Jesus was referring to the last days of Peter. A time would arrive when he would lift up his arms in order to tie a rope around his waist (or according to the church father Tertullian, he would stretch his arms as he was tied to a cross). Then he would be brought to the place of execution.

Although the Bible does not tell us how Peter died, the ancient Church History does. When the Gospel of John was written in A.D. 70-98 Peter had already died and it was known how Peter had died. The words, “the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God” show that Peter had already died when John wrote this Gospel. The death of Jesus Christ glorified God (13:31-32). Also the death of Peter was to glorify God (21:19). “How precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints”¹⁰⁴.

The church father, Tertullian, (A.D. 190-216) wrote, “At Rome Nero was the first to stain this growing faith with blood. Peter was girded by another when he was bound to the cross” (cited in *Antidote against the sting of a scorpion*, XV).

The church father, Eusebius (A.D. 264-340) wrote: “Peter had apparently preached to the Jews in the diaspora in Pontus and Bythia and Cappadocia and Asia (provinces in modern Turkey). When he came to Rome, he was crucified upside down, because he asked to suffer thus” (cited in *Church History* III,1). According to early Christian tradition died about A.D. 68 during the persecution under the emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68).

b. Jesus taught Peter to follow him in every circumstance of life.

When Jesus had finished making this prediction, he said to Peter, “Follow me!” He did not mean this in a literal sense, because *the daily visible fellowship of the apostles with Jesus on earth had come to an end*. Whatever would happen in the future, *now in the present* Peter must be a disciple and apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ and as such follow him in service (being a fisher of men and making disciples of all nations), in suffering and finally in death.

(V) 21:20-23. Jesus removes the misunderstanding regarding John.

21:20. Peter turned (vpap) and saw (vipa) the disciple whom Jesus loved (viia) following (vppa), who also at the supper had leaned back (viaa) on his breast and had said (viaa), “Lord, who is (vipa) it that is going to betray (vppa) you?”

21:21. So when Peter saw (vpaa) him, he said (vipa) to Jesus: “Lord, what about him?” (i.e. “What is going to happen to him?”)

21:22. Jesus said (vipa) to him: “If I wish (vspa) that he remain (vnpa) until I come (vipn), what is that to you? (i.e. That is not your business). You must follow (vmpa) me!”

21:23. This word (rumour) then got out (spread) (viaa) among the brothers that this disciple (John) was not to die (vipa); yet Jesus did not say (viaa) to him that he was not to die (vipa), but: “If I wish (will)(vspa) that he remain (vnpa) until I come (vipn), what is that to you?”

a. Jesus denounces inquisitiveness with regard to future events.

It seems that Jesus walked away from the Sea of Galilee in order to once again disappear from their sight. Peter followed him and saw his close friend John also following. He asked Jesus what would happen to John in the future.

⁹⁹ G; zónnumi

¹⁰⁰ G; gérasakó

¹⁰¹ G; ekteino

¹⁰² G; pheró, oisó, énegka

¹⁰³ Romans 8:28; Philipians 2:12-13

¹⁰⁴ Psalm 116:15

Jesus knew that the impulsive Peter was once again interfering in a matter that had nothing to do with him. That is why the last command of Jesus did not dawn on him.

Jesus said to him, “*If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you (i.e. this is my business)? Your business is to keep on following me*” (21:22)! The Lord Jesus Christ had his own plan for his disciple John, but it was not necessary that Peter should know this plan! John may have to suffer a martyr’s death or he may live on until the Lord’s (second?) coming. Jesus Christ did *not* reveal the future of John to anyone and thus neither John nor Peter could have any knowledge about this in advance.

The Lord impressed on the mind of Peter the fact that curiosity about John’s future must make way for obedience to the Lord’s all-important command, “Follow me!” “Feed my sheep!” “Shepherd my sheep!” Peter should not occupy himself with God’s unrevealed plan, but rather with God’s revealed plan for people. It is none of Peter’s business to interfere or meddle with Jesus’ plan for John. It is his business to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and to be faithful to his own commission.

Inquisitiveness with regard to the future matters must make place for obedience with regard to the present matters. Peter and Christians must not occupy themselves with the will of God in matters that have *not been revealed* to them, but with the matters that *have been revealed* to them¹⁰⁵.

Peter and Christians must follow Jesus Christ here and now and shepherd his flock with God’s Word here and now. That is the work that Jesus Christ would like to see us doing when he returns¹⁰⁶! There is still very much work to be done! There is a world to reach with the gospel! There are very many people in the nations that need to be made disciples. There are millions of poor and destitute people that need to be fed and cared for. Peter and all Christians should rivet their attention on that task! There are times when our questions are out of order! And questions about God’s eternal and unrevealed plan are always out of order!

b. Jesus emphasised that discipleship was more important than knowledge.

Because John was still alive when these words (“If I want him to remain alive until I return.”) were written (between A.D. 70-98), some Christians were speculating whether the apostle John would remain alive until the second coming of Jesus Christ. A rumour spread among Christians that the apostle John would not die. Christians began to emphasise what was *not important* (‘John will remain alive’) at the cost of what was *really important* (‘Keep on following me!’).

Maybe already at that time the sensational knowledge with regard to the future events began to crowd out active discipleship of believers in the present time. The writer corrects this misunderstanding about the apostle John and the misplaced emphasis on the future events.

c. John still lived when the Gospel of John was written.

These above mentioned words only have significance when the apostle John still lived at the time these words were written. If John had already died, this misunderstanding would not have existed anymore. But if John still lived, the misconception had to be rectified. Otherwise Christians would be shocked in their faith when John died. How long John would still live was something only Jesus Christ determined!

This also is evidence that John wrote the Gospel of John between A.D. 70 and 98.

(VI) 21:24-25. The elders at Ephesus give an official testimony with regard to the trustworthiness of the Gospel of John.

21:24. This is the disciple who is testifying (vpaa) concerning these things and who has written (vpaa) these things, and we know (by relationship, reflection and intuition)¹⁰⁷ (vira) that true is (vipa) his testimony. (By placing the word ‘true’ at the beginning it is emphasised!)

21:25. Now there are (vipa) many other things that Jesus did (viaa), which if they were written (vspp) one by one, I suppose¹⁰⁸ (vipn) that the world itself could not contain (have room for)¹⁰⁹ (vnaa) the written volumes.

These closing words are from others than the apostle John.

a. The testimony of a group of known people (21:24).

The words ‘This is the disciple’ refer to the last mentioned ‘disciple that presumably would not die’ (21:23), thus, to the apostle John. Peter had already died in A.D. 68.

The words ‘who testifies to these things’ refers to the testimony of the apostle John as an eye-witness of everything written in the Gospel of John chapters 1 to 21. The verb ‘testifies’ stands in the present continuous tense and means that John was still alive and active when these words were written.

The words ‘who wrote these things’ refer to what John had written in his Gospel. These words cannot mean that John witnesses about what he once wrote. They can only mean that John still lived and was occupied with witnessing about

¹⁰⁵ Deuteronomy 29:29

¹⁰⁶ Matthew 24:45-47

¹⁰⁷ G: oida

¹⁰⁸ G: oiomai

¹⁰⁹ G: chóreo

Jesus and that he had recently written these words down. The apostle John is the author of the Gospel of John, which he had written between A.D. 70 and 98.

Because the word 'true' stands at the beginning, the emphasis is placed on the absolute dependability of the eye-witness account of John. This group of people have probably been associated with the apostle John over a long period of time¹¹⁰. They had often heard his preaching. They had also heard the preaching of the other apostles and they had seen how the apostles lived as examples¹¹¹. They had also read the three Synoptic Gospels: Mark (A.D. 44-46), Luke (A.D. 60-61) and Matthew (A.D. 63-66). But above all they had the testimony of the Holy Spirit in their hearts with regard to the truth and excellence of the words and deeds of Jesus Christ (14:26; 16:13-15). They had personally experienced the truthfulness and dependability of the testimony of the apostle John! That is why this group of people also recorded their personal testimony concerning the Gospel of John.

This group of people ('we') did not identify themselves by name. They were probably the elders of the congregation of Ephesus or the elders of the province of Asia.

Cerinthus was a false teacher who lived and spread his false teachings in Ephesus during the time of the apostle John. He taught that Jesus was only a human being, the son of Joseph and Mary by natural birth. But according to him Jesus was wiser and more righteous than all other people (just as modern humanism teaches).

He taught that the divine Christ descended in the form of a dove onto the human Jesus at his baptism with water by John the Baptist. He also taught that the divine Christ left the human Jesus before his crucifixion, so that it was not the divine Christ who suffered, died and was resurrected from the dead, but only the human Jesus (Irenaeus)¹¹² and Hippolytus¹¹³. Irenaeus¹¹⁴ said that one of the goals of John was to refute the false doctrines of Cerinthus.

That is why John places so much emphasis on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who without laying down his divine nature, took on the human nature at his birth from Mary. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven with both his resurrected human nature and his divine nature¹¹⁵.

The main goal of the apostle John remains John 20:30-31: to strengthen the faith of Christians in Jesus Christ and thus give them the assurance that they possess the genuine life! The verb 'to believe' stands in the present continuous tense. The miraculous signs were recorded, not only so that non-believers would begin to believe, but also that believers would persevere in their faith in spite of the persecution against Christians and the false teachers like Cerinthus.

b. The closing statement by one these persons (21:25).

The words 'I think' refers to the closing statement of one of the above mentioned group of witnesses, probably the one who dictated or recorded what John spoke in John chapter 21. It is possible that this closing statement was of the apostle John himself. The statement is a hyperbole, an exaggeration in order to emphasize. Although many of the events in the life of Jesus on earth have been recorded in the Gospel of John, this final witness knows that there were many more things that were spoken and done, so many that they could not be recorded. Jesus Christ exists from eternity as God (1:1). He is the Creator of the universe and the earth (1:3). He is the God who spoke and acted during the Old Testament period (8:58)¹¹⁶. He is the God who spoke and acted during the New Testament period (5:17-18; 15:13-15)¹¹⁷. All his words and deeds throughout the history of this world cannot be recorded! A finite number of books can never catch the infinite God-Man, Jesus Christ, in words!

APPLICATIONS

- 21:3. Peter returned to his previous occupation: he went fishing. Whenever you do not know what to do, go and do the last clear command of Jesus Christ. Someone said, "Never doubt in the dark what God said to you in the light!"
- 21:4. Realise that Jesus Christ may sometimes come to meet you and that you may not immediately recognise him.
- 21:6. If you trust Jesus Christ, then do what he says. You will never be disappointed that you obeyed!
- 21:12. Never be afraid to ask Jesus Christ the question "Who are you?" It is only when you seek that you will find, and when you ask that you will receive¹¹⁸.
- 21:14. The Bible records all the important times that Jesus Christ appeared to people after his resurrection from the dead. No other religious leader died to make atonement for the sins of his people. And no other religion contains any historical evidence of the resurrection from the dead!
- 21:15-16. How would you answer the question of Jesus, "Do you truly love me?"
- 21:15-17. One of the most important tasks in God's Kingdom is shepherding the sheep.

¹¹⁰ cf. Acts 20:18

¹¹¹ cf. Acts 20:17-20

¹¹² In *Against false teachers*, I, xxvi, 1.

¹¹³ In *The rejection of all false teachings*, VII, xxi.

¹¹⁴ In *Against false teachers* III, xi, 1

¹¹⁵ cf. Philippians 2:5-11

¹¹⁶ 1 Peter 1:10-12

¹¹⁷ Hebrews 1:1-2

¹¹⁸ Matthew 7:7-8

- 21:18. Even when others lead you to where you do not want to go, Jesus Christ will be present¹¹⁹.
21:19. The business of all Christians is to follow Jesus Christ.
21:22. Christians should not occupy themselves with God's unrevealed will, but rather with God's revealed will.

QUESTIONS

- 21:1-11. What was the first miracle?
21:12-14. What was the second miracle?
21:14. What were all the appearances of Jesus to his disciples?
21:15-17. How did Jesus restore Peter?
21:18-19. What did Jesus say about the future of the apostle Peter?
21:19-23. What did Jesus say about the future of the apostle John?
21:24-25. What is the importance of the testimony of the elders in Ephesus?

¹¹⁹ Matthew 28:20