

A Powerful Revelation of Jesus Christ

What is it you remember most about Jesus? For most, it might be the circumstances of his birth. Is it how he lived? Still for others it might be how he died. Is it His resurrection, or His divinity? What He taught? Do we separate Christ's life into an isolated category intriguing to us, while losing sight of Jesus Himself? Do we magnify one aspect of His life to the point that we are blinded to all else about Him as He becomes simply a figment of our imagination?

The disciples of our Savior had difficulty seeing the real Jesus, in spite of living three years up close and personally with Him. Seeing beyond their distorted conceptions of messianic hopes made it difficult. The Jesus they desired became a figment of their imaginations. The real Jesus went unseen for the biggest part of His earthly ministry.

When one studies the life of Jesus, it is easy to ascertain that Jesus tried so very hard to place Himself in real life situations. The story here in John 21:1-15 is a case in point. He gives His disciples a real down to Earth picture of the resurrected Messiah as He cooks breakfast for them.

Can you imagine eating a breakfast in which the Lord and Savior and Creator and the Messiah, had prepared for you? When the disciples were coming to shore after fishing all night, Jesus had the fish on the grill. I wonder, Who kindled the fire? Who baked the bread? Who caught the fish lying on the grill? Did Jesus go fishing that morning and catch the fish He was cooking? Can you imagine Jesus standing on the seashore casting a net for breakfast? Is He stripped of His outer garment so He can cast His net more effectively? Who cleaned the fish? Did He wash His hands before He prepared the meal? Was He wearing a halo? Was He a good cook? Or was it a miracle? Perhaps Jesus spoke and it was!! Personally, I would like to think it was more natural than supernatural at this point. He asks the disciples to bring some of their big fish to grill. He wasn't in a hurry. He cooked the meal in the most natural way.

Experiencing the real Messiah is our greatest challenge. The disciples stood in awe each time God performed a miracle through Jesus. The miracles were God's way of getting their attention. Yet, nothing made Him more real than the ordinary things He did with them, such as cooking breakfast. Jesus experiencing life with them as He lived what He taught made Him very real.

It was difficult for them to allow the Messiah of Scripture to step out of the pages of Holy Writ into their lives – to be *real*. Jesus ate the last Passover meal with them. He washed their feet. He asks at least one of them to touch His nail scars and to put his hand into the hole made by the soldier's spear thrust into His side. But here He was now, cooking and serving them breakfast!

Imagine the resurrected Christ – God in the flesh – serving a group of fisherman breakfast!

“Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ None of the disciples dared ask Him, ‘Who are You?’ They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish” (John 21:12-13 NIV). All but John had deserted Him at the cross. Peter had denied Him three times. Thomas had wondered – “How can I believe in Christ?” Now Jesus is cooking breakfast for them.

Seeing the real Jesus is the most difficult thing for the disciples to grasp. He is resurrected. He talks to them. He instructs them where to catch fish. He prepares food for them. He eats with them. He was the same Jesus He was before He was crucified and resurrected. Later John says, we have heard Him, seen Him and touched Him with our own hands (1 John 1:1). John is saying Jesus is *real*. Yet, how difficult it is for them to abandon their fanciful messianic dreams to see the real Jesus?

Of all the experiences of the disciples John could have chosen to close out the book of John none could be more appropriate than this scene. The disciples fish all night and catch no fish. Jesus simply instructs them to cast the net on the other side of the boat, and they haul up 153 fish. It is almost the same exact feat Jesus instructed these fishermen to do when He first called them to be fishers of men in Luke 5:1-11. He is as real at this moment as He was when He called them. Nothing has changed. In fact, the disciples have not changed all that much. They are still slow-to-believe.

The early morning dusk prevents the disciples from seeing anymore than a vague outline of a person on the shore. They may have only heard His voice. They have no idea who asks them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. If you have ever fished all day and caught nothing, you are usually ready to try anything anyone suggests to catch fish. It was even worse. They had fished all night. It is when the net is filled with fish that Peter proclaims, “It is the Lord!” When the disciples came to shore no one asks, “Who are You?”

It was Peter’s idea to go fishing. No doubt they had questions rolling around in their minds. What should have been – what could have been – what would have been, if only? Their hope may have been fading. Then out of nowhere Jesus appears on the shore with bread and fish on the grill.

Peter later says in 1 Peter 1:3 that **“He has begotten us to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.”** It was Peter’s way of saying “Jesus is *real*!” Preparing breakfast for the disciples was the kind of thing that gave them a living hope. What could be more real than eating breakfast with the resurrected Jesus Christ? Jesus brings the Scriptures to life as He cooks breakfast.

After they had finished their breakfast Jesus asks Peter, ***“Simon son of John, do you truly love Me more than these?”*** I am almost certain the disciples were feeling the weight of their betrayal. So Jesus brings it up. Peter is not the only one who denied Christ. They all deserted. But Peter had proclaimed he would not deny Jesus even if everyone else did in Matthew 26:33-35 [NIV]). So Jesus appropriately asks Peter the question.

33 Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”

34 “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown Me three times.”

35 But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You.”

It is only natural for Peter to be the focus of the conversation. No doubt all of them hung their heads in shame. Jesus asks, ***“Simon son of John, do you truly love Me more than these?”*** (John 21:15). All the disciples feel the weight of the question. But Peter had been anxious to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God – anxious to swear his allegiance above all others. Peter placed his loyalty above all others.

Jesus’ questioning of Peter is what makes this account so powerful. Jesus does not appear with a halo or clothed in robes of splendor, even though He could have. He performs a miracle, He cooks breakfast, and He does so all to reassure His chosen ones. They deserted Jesus, but He will never desert them. Their love may have waned, but His will remain strong. He leaves no doubt about His love for them. He approaches them without reservation. The Hebrews writer quotes Moses, ***“Never will I leave, never will I forsake you”*** (Hebrews 13:5; Deuteronomy 31:16). Jesus Christ is there for you right now, if you but seek Him! As the Apostle Paul said in Acts 17:27, ***“ . . . if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.”***

Their relationship with Jesus and His disciples now has greater possibilities than ever before. Jesus is not condescending to their level. He is one of them, even in His resurrection. This is not a superficial meal. Jesus knew the issues of their hearts. He knows the questions rolling around in their minds. He cares. He is there to reassure. He came to heal. They needed it. They longed for it. Jesus cleared the air. He strengthens the relationship. Jesus strengthens their hearts through His saving grace (Hebrews 13:9-10). Jesus does not appear to them to condemn. He does it to reassure them of their highest possibilities.

John 21:17-23 (NIV) continues,

“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. I tell you the truth, 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.’ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then He said to him, ‘Follow Me!’

“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?’) When Peter saw him, he asked, ‘Lord, what about him?’

“Jesus answered, ‘If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow Me.’ Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers 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?’”

Peter responds in the positive. Peter seeks to deflect Jesus’ attention to another disciple as he asks “What about him?” But Jesus does not let him off the hook. Jesus simply asks, “What is it to you? You must follow Me.” Jesus is not there to condemn but encourage. Jesus reassures him that he will be led to places he never wanted to go or ever dreamed of going. It is Jesus Who is going to lead him to do the unimaginable.

Malachi 3:3 portrays God as a refiner and purifier of silver – in other words, a silversmith. A silversmith takes a pie of silver ore and places it in a ladle over a fire. He holds it over the middle of the fire at the hottest point to burn away all the impurities. He sits in front of the fire with his eye on the melting ore as the impurities rise to the top and burn off. He removes the slag skim residue left floating on the molten metal. If he heats the silver too much, it will ruin the silver. He keeps his eye on the silver until his reflection is mirrored in the molten silver. The entire time the silversmith never takes his eye off the silver.

The disciples were feeling the heat as they ate breakfast with Jesus. They were reminded of God’s unrelenting presence. He was unwilling to desert. He would remain with them encouraging and refining their expectations until He sees His image in them. If today you are feeling the heat of the fire, remember that God has His eye on you and will keep watching you until He sees His image in you. It is a statement about God’s character.

It is a sad reality but Jesus is accustomed to His followers turning their backs on Him. As John recorded in John 6:66-69 (NIV),

“From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him.

““You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the twelve.

“Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.’”

Life takes on an entirely different meaning the moment we realize the only real possession we have on Earth and in Heaven is God. The moment we realize He will never desert us in the midst of serious doubting is when we will achieve that peace that passes all understanding. Amazingly, the faithful of old managed to keep their faith in God in grieving times, by reminding themselves of God’s presence. God is with them. Listen to the psalmist in Psalm 73:21-26 (NIV):

“When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.

“Yet I am always with You; You hold me by my right hand. You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will take me into glory.

“Whom have I in Heaven but You? And Earth has nothing I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

The psalmist realizes there is no getting away from God. The psalmist is bitter to the point of senselessness. Yet, God does not desert him in the mist of his bitter grievances. He does not desert us in our bitterness. He holds us with His right hand until we realize there is nowhere else we can go. When our flesh fails God becomes the strength of our hearts as we are reminded of his eternal love.

Jesus is resurrected. He has been glorified. He kneels on the beach over the fire and instructs His disciples to bring some of the fish from the catch to grill. He already has fish and bread on the grill. The appetizers are ready, while the big meal is prepared. He could have appeared anywhere He wanted after His resurrection. He could have appeared at the Temple, or maybe even in Caesar’s palace. He could have appeared before the Sanhedrin, or the Senate in Rome. He could have made the sun stand still. But He chose instead to appear before these fishermen.

Imagine! The most powerful place Jesus could be at this moment is on the shore with these fishermen. The revolution in the hearts of men that He seeks must be ignited in their hearts first. It is the kind of revolution that leads them to places they never dreamed. He simply tells Peter, ***“Feed My sheep.”***

Jesus did not run as a politician. He did not spend His time trying to change the order or tempo of Temple worship. He simply appeared to these fishermen and asks Peter, ***“Do you love Me?”***

The question Jesus asks us each time we partake in communion is, ***“Do you love Me?”*** There is no question about His love. These disciples were clinging to their hopes for eternal life. They knew they had no one to whom they could turn.

The world was about to be turned upside down with the love these lonely fishermen held for Jesus. Try to imagine the confused religious climate in Jerusalem – the moral decay in the Roman world as Jesus meets with these fishermen. Jesus did not discuss politics, or religion, or the weather. Think about it. His only question is, ***“Do you love Me?”***

That’s revolutionary. Think of what happened on the Day of Pentecost. Peter did something only love could lead him to do as he proclaimed in Acts 2:36-41 (NIV):

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, Whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.’

“With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”

Peter also did not hesitate to proclaim in Acts 4:12 (NIV):

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under Heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”