

Notes on John 21

Hallel Fellowship (<http://hallel.info>)

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1 After these things Yeshua manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way. 2 Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

1. This chapter begins with "after these things." After what things?
 - a. The disciples' find Yeshua's tomb after His death and burial (John 20:1-18).
 - b. Yeshua appears to the disciples — minus Thomas — that evening and "breathes" the Holy Spirit on them (John 20:19-23).
 - c. Yeshua appears eight days later to Thomas, a.k.a. Didymus, which means "the twin."
 1. That first evening Yeshua appeared while Thomas was gone. Thomas said that unless he touched Yeshua's wounds he wouldn't believe Yeshua came back from the dead (John 20:24-25).
 2. Earlier when Yeshua had said He would go to Yerushalayim after resurrecting Lazarus and knowing some Jewish leaders wanted to kill Him, Thomas said, "Let's go so we can die with Him" (John 11:16).
 3. Thomas declares, "my Lord and my God," without even touching Yeshua's wounds (John 20:26-29).
 - d. Yeshua told the disciples, particularly Simon, to wait for Him in Galilee (Mark 16:4).
2. Five of these seven disciples were an interesting lot:
 - a. Simon
 - i. Captain of a fishing venture on the lake of Galilee (a.k.a. Sea of Kinneret/Galilee/Tiberius).
 - ii. He was passionate.
 1. Proclaimed early that Yeshua was the Messiah (Matt. 16:16-19; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20; John 6:68,69).
 2. Knowing well the danger of rough waters, he steps out of his boat during a storm to join Yeshua among the waves (Matt. 14:28-31).
 3. Promised to be faithful to the end (Matt. 26:33-35).
 4. Attacked Malchus during Yeshua's arrest (Mark 14:47)
 5. Able to be swayed by public opinion.
 1. Denied knowing Yeshua three times during the trial (Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:55-62; John 18:17, 18, 25-27).
 2. That weakness persisted later in life, even after great acts of faith, shown by his being swayed to segregate himself from believers drawn from the goyim. This is after Simon himself received and understood the vision of the unclean animals on the sheet (Acts 11).
 - iii. He wanted to know more about God, shown by his questions about the meaning of parables (of the steward, Luke 12:41), teachings (of defilement and of forgiveness, Matt. 15:15 and 18:21).
 - b. Thomas
 - c. Nathaniel
 - i. His name is Hebrew for "God has given."
 - ii. Yeshua calls him "a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."
 - iii. Because Matthew, Mark and Luke don't mention him among the 12, and John doesn't mention Bartholomew ("Son of Tolomei") among the 12, the thinking since the ninth century is that Nathaniel and Bartholomew are the same person.¹ Some think the disciple Simon the Canaan was Nathaniel.²
 - d. Sons of Zebedee — Ya'akov and Yochanan
 - i. Partners with Simon and their father in a fishing business with at least two boats (Luke 5:10).
 - ii. Yeshua named them Boanerges, said to mean "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17).
 1. Some think this was a scribal misspelling of the Hebrew phrase, *b'nei ra'am* (בְּנֵי רָעַם), which would be transliterated into Greek as *Beneregem*.³ This is said to refer to the brothers' desire to call down fire from Heaven on inhospitable Samaritans (Luke 9:53-54).
 2. Another possibility is that the nickname was *b'nei regesh* (בְּנֵי רֶגֶשׁ), or "sons of tumult" or "sons of insurrection," taken into Greek as *Benereges*.⁴
 - e. Two other disciples

1 Orr, James, M.A., D.D. General Editor. "Entry for 'BARTHOLOMEW.'" International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. <www.studylight.org/enc/isb/view.cgi?number=T1182>. 1915.

2 ibid. "Entry for 'NATHANAEL (2).'" <www.studylight.org/enc/isb/view.cgi?number=T6281>.

3 Clarke, Adam. "Commentary on Mark 3." *The Adam Clarke Commentary*. <www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=mr&chapter=003>. 1832.

4 ibid.

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

3. Several times Yeshua appeared after His resurrection, but the people didn't recognize Him.
 - a. Two disciples encounter Yeshua while walking on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).
 - "Their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him" (verse 16).
 - b. Mary encounters Yeshua at His tomb (Luke 20:11-18).

5 So Yeshua said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." 6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. 7 Therefore that disciple whom Yeshua loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish. 9 So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. 10 Yeshua said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." 11 Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, **153**; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Yeshua said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Yeshua came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Yeshua was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

4. Yeshua takes Simon "the Rock" back to the foundation, and the rest of the seven disciples with him.
 - a. This harkens back to the time Yeshua first called Simon as a disciple. A crowd was pushing Yeshua into the lake, so He got into Simon's boat to use as a floating pulpit.

4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; 7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Yeshua's feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:6-8)

- b. The seven remembered this key promise from Yeshua that they would be "fishers of men."
5. What is the number 153 regarding fish all about? That's a 2,000-year-old question.
6. Some say that this number has prophetic significance.⁵
 - a. Some (like Augustine) say that it is a number representing the number of commandments (10) added to the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit.
 - b. 153 is the added numerical value of the Greek words "Peter" and "fish."
 - c. Some ancient writers (such as Jerome) held that there were 153 different types of fish in the world; this represents a "full harvest" of all of the world.
 - d. Some (like Cyril of Alexandria) say that 100 stands for the Gentiles, 50 for Israel and 3 for the Trinity.
7. If 153 fish were prophecy, how do the prophets use the prophetic icon of fish?⁶
 - a. Through the prophet Yetziqi'el (Ezekiel), God likened Pharaoh and Egypt to fish on the hook of Nebuchadnezzar in the 29th year of Yehudah king Yehoiakhin's captivity (see also Jer. 46:13). Greek historian Herodotus wrote that Pharaoh was so full of himself that he said that God Himself couldn't dislodge him.⁷

1 In the tenth R1005 year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying, 2 "Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophesy against him and against all Egypt. 3 "Speak and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, The great monster that lies in the midst of his rivers, That has said, 'My Nile is mine, and I myself have made it.' 4 "I will put hooks in your jaws And make the fish of your rivers cling to your scales. And I will bring you up out of the midst of your rivers, And all the fish of your rivers will cling to your scales. 5 "I will abandon R1011 you to the wilderness, you and all the fish of your rivers; You will fall on the open field; you will not be brought together or gathered. I have given you for food R1013 to the beasts of the earth and to the birds of the sky. 6 "Then all the inhabitants of Egypt will know that I am the LORD. Because they have been only a staff made of reed to the house of Israel. 7 "When they took hold of you with the hand, You broke and tore all their hands; And when they leaned on you, You broke and made all their loins quake." (Eze. 29:1-7)

1. Incidentally, verse 10 speaks of the "tower of Syrene," which is near Ethiopia. It was famous for a water well into which the sun shone straight down at mid-day, because it is located on the equator of the earth. Erastosthenes in 215 B.C. used that well and the Pythagorean theorem (circa 500 B.C. and earlier) to calculate the circumference of the earth to within a couple of decimal points of the modern measurement.
2. The school of Pythagoras held that 265:153 was a holy number, a ratio that came to be known as

5 Guzik, David. "Commentary on John 21." *David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible*.

<www.studydrive.org/com/guz/view.cgi?book=joh&chapter=021>. 1997-2003.

6 Torrey, R.A. "Entry for 'Fishes.'" *The New Topical Text Book*. <www.studydrive.org/con/ttt/view.cgi?number=T217>. 1897.

7 Clarke. "Commentary on Ezekiel 29." <www.studydrive.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=eze&chapter=029>. 1832.

“the measure of the fish,” because the figure formed by the intersection looked like a fish. It’s the ratio of the height and width of the intersection area of two circles with the edges of each circle touching the center of the other circle.⁸

1. Pythagorans worshipped mathematics, singing the praises of the “music of the spheres.” Plato was said to be a Pythagorean disciple.
2. 153 intrigued the ancients because it has unique mathematical characteristics.⁹
 1. It’s the sum of numbers 1 through 17.
 2. 265:153 is the closest whole-number approximation of the square root of 3.
 3. It’s the sum of the cube of each digit.
 4. It’s the sum of the factors of the first five numbers.
3. 153 was a number well-understood by and even in a sense representing the Greek world the apostles would soon be reaching.
- b. Apostle Matthew records Yeshua saying that the end of the age will be like a dragnet that catches good and bad fish.

47 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; 48 and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. 49 So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take F319 out the wicked from among the righteous, 50 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 13:47–50)

- c. In Ecclesiastes, time and chance are surprise killers of men, like a net is to fish and a snare to birds.

11 I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all. 12 Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them. (Eccl. 9:11–12)
- d. Habakkuk cries out to God about the oppression of the Chaldeans in the time before the Babylonian captivity, likening their capriciousness to those scooping up fish (i.e., the kingdom of Yehudah) in a net.

12 Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. You, O LORD, have appointed them to judge; And You, O Rock, have established them to correct. 13 Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they? 14 Why have You made men like the fish of the sea, Like creeping things without a ruler over them? 15 The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, Drag them away with their net, And gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are glad. 16 Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net And burn F14 incense to their fishing net; Because through these things their catch is large, And their food is plentiful. 17 Will they therefore empty their net And continually slay nations without sparing? (Hab. 1:12–17)
- e. The prophetic icon of fish seems to picture those who are helpless.

15 So when they had finished breakfast, Yeshua said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Yeshua said to him, "Tend My sheep." 18 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." 19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

8. Peter denied Yeshua three times; Yeshua asks about his love for — commitment to — Him three times.
9. “The Stone” “crumbled” and wept bitterly when he had vehemently disowned Yeshua the third time. That pain seems to return when Yeshua makes him confirm His commitment the third time.
10. Yeshua predicted not only that Peter would deny Him but also that he would recover and be strength to the other core disciples.
11. Peter ran away from persecution at Yeshua’s trial; Peter will walk to his own death after boldly talking about God’s redemption of mankind through Yeshua.

20 Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Yeshua loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" 21 So Peter seeing him said to Yeshua, "Lord, and what about this man?" 22 Yeshua said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" 23 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Yeshua did not say to him that he

8 “Vesica piscis.” Wikipedia. <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vesica_piscis> Accessed May 9, 2008.

9 Gupta, Shyam S. “Curious Properties of 153.” *Science Reporter*, February 1991, India. <www.shyamsundergupta.com/c153.htm>

would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" 24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things which Yeshua did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.