



## **Clearing Up A Misinterpretation of John 21**

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November 2018

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Over 20 years ago I was in a Bible study. We spent two years in the book of John. We got to the following Scripture:

“Shim`on Kefa, T`oma called Didymus, Natan`el of Kanah in the Galil, and the sons of Zavdai, and two others of his talmidim were together. Shim`on Kefa said to them, "I'm going fishing." They told him, "We are also coming with you." They immediately went out, and entered into the boat. That night, they caught nothing.” (John 21: 2-3 HNV)

The pastor explained these verses in John chapter 21 in the following way: the disciples had gone back to Galilee; Peter decided to go back to his job/life of fishing and the other disciples decided to join him in that endeavor (my paraphrase). A few years later I was in another study situation where this event was being discussed. I shared what I had learned previously. A woman opposed that interpretation vehemently in front of the group, yet she never explained to me why it was incorrect, leaving me feeling shamed, embarrassed and confused.

Fast forward to now. We have been looking at women, their position in the Body of Believers, and how Scriptures have been misinterpreted to diminish, and in cases actually extinguish, this vital part of the Body. Because of our recent discussions on this topic, the Ruach has been bringing certain parts of Scripture to my attention. (I am sure you can relate what I mean - how your Bible leaps out of your hands and whacks you between your eyes).

I was reading Matthew 28 and verses 5-10 and 16 jumped out at me.

“The angel answered the women, "Don't be afraid, for I know that you seek Yeshua, who has been crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, just like he said. Come, see the place where the Lord was lying. Go quickly and tell his talmidim, 'He has risen from the dead, and behold, he goes before you into the Galil; there you will see him.' Behold, I have told you." They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his talmidim word. As they went to tell his talmidim, behold, Yeshua met them, saying, "Rejoice!" They came and took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Yeshua said to them, "Don't be afraid. Go tell my brothers that they should go into the Galil, and there they will see me.” (Matt. 28: 5-10 HNV)

“But the eleven talmidim went into the Galil, to the mountain where Yeshua had sent them.”  
(Matt. 28: 16 HNV)

So, Peter didn't go back to Galilee to take up his old occupation of fishing for a living in John 21. He and the other disciples went back to Galilee from Jerusalem because that's what Yeshua told them to do. They were waiting for Yeshua to meet them there. While they were waiting, Peter decided to do some fishing.

And the two women were the first to see Yeshua. He gave them the message to tell the disciples to meet Him in Galilee. Mark 16: 9-12 tells us that Yeshua appeared to Miriam from Magdala and two men walking in a field (see Luke 24: 13-35 also), yet the disciples did not believe them.

“Now when He had risen early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Miriam from Magdala, from whom He had cast out seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. When they heard that He was alive, and had been seen by her, they disbelieved. After these things He was revealed in another form to two of them, as they walked, on their way into the country. They went away and told it to the rest. They didn't believe them, either. Afterward He was revealed to the Eleven themselves as they sat at the table, and He rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they didn't believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.” (Mark 16: 9-14 HNV)

It wasn't until Yeshua actually appeared before the Eleven that they actually believed (Luke 24: 36-53) and for Thomas it took even longer.

“But T'oma, one of the Twelve, called Didymus, wasn't with them when Yeshua came. The other talmidim therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." After eight days again His talmidim were inside, and T'oma was with them. Yeshua came, the doors being locked, and stood in the midst, and said, "Shalom be to you." Then He said to T'oma, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands. Reach here your hand, and put it into My side. Don't be unbelieving, but believing." T'oma answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" Yeshua said to him, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed." (John 20: 24-29 HNV)

The Book of John then continues with the events at the Sea of Galilee in chapter 21. Here, then, the disciples, after finally believing the reports of the women and the two men on the road to Emmaus, are waiting for Yeshua to meet with them. This is the real reason why they are back in Galilee. What a relief to have this incorrect interpretation cleared up and gain a release from the shame I experienced while sharing that incorrect interpretation.

It is also important to understand that women were the first to see the risen Messiah and entrusted with delivering His message to the disciples. First the women, then the men, then finally Messiah Yeshua Himself delivered the message. The whole Body, with Yeshua as the Head, delivering the good news: He is risen!

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