

Forty Days: The Revelations & Impartations of the Risen Savior *Galilee and the Mystery of the 153 Fish*

We often rush from the sorrow of Good Friday to the joy of Easter Sunday, and then leap forward to the power of Pentecost. But between the Resurrection and the Ascension lies a sacred period of instruction — forty days — that turned a group of hiding, heartbroken men and women into the world-changers who turned the Roman Empire upside down.

We find the definitive record of this interval in the opening verses of the book of Acts. Dr. Luke, who also penned the Gospel that bears his name, writes again to his friend Theophilus, picking up the story exactly where he left off:

"The former account that I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:1–3) [^1]

Think of that! Forty days. I like to call this season the "Forty Days of Revelation and Impartation." It was a time when the risen Savior intentionally and repeatedly demonstrated the reality of His resurrection to those who had followed Him.

The Infallible Proofs of Life

Scripture tells us that Jesus "presented Himself alive." He wasn't a ghost; He wasn't a hallucination. He manifested Himself to them by "many infallible proofs." And the primary proof was His presence.

So, who did He appear to? While we may not have a complete diary of every single moment, the biblical record highlights at least eleven distinct post-resurrection appearances:

- Mary Magdalene: She was the very first, greeting Him in the garden near the tomb on that early Sunday morning in Jerusalem.
- The Other Women: As they returned from the empty tomb, Jesus met them on the road.

- Simon: This is likely Simon, the half-brother of Jesus, rather than Simon Peter.
- Two Disciples on the Emmaus Road: In what was probably a long Sunday afternoon walk, He opened the Scriptures to them.
- Ten Disciples: That same Sunday evening, He appeared in the upper room. Thomas was notably absent.
- Eleven Disciples (One Week Later): A week later, He returned to the same group. This time, Thomas was present.
- Seven Disciples at the Sea of Galilee: This is the profound encounter we will examine today.
- Eleven Disciples on the Mountain: Likely the moment of the Great Commission.
- More Than 500 at Once: A massive gathering of believers.
- James: The half-brother of Jesus.
- The Disciples at the Ascension: His final moments before ascending to heaven.
- (And later, of course, a dramatic appearance to the Apostle Paul on the Damascus road.)

But today, our focus is drawn to one specific encounter: when Jesus met His disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. There, by that familiar water, Jesus staged an incredible miracle that was not only a repeat performance but also a profound revelation of His glory.

The Divine Appointment in Galilee

To understand the full impact of this moment, we must remember that Jesus' death was not a surprise—to Him. Repeatedly, He had predicted His suffering, death, burial, and subsequent resurrection on the third day. He did this at least four specific times.

The last of these predictions came during the intimate setting of the Last Supper. Jesus knew exactly what lay ahead, and He told them:

“All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’” (Matthew 26:31) [^2]

That prophecy was fulfilled with brutal accuracy. But Jesus didn't stop there. In the very next breath, He gave them a clear instruction for the future:

“But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.” (Matthew 26:32) [^3]

This was not a vague suggestion; it was a specific, strategic rendezvous. He confirmed the timeline: just as Jonah spent three days in the belly of the fish, so the Son of Man would be three days in the heart of the earth. He detailed how He would be mistreated by religious leaders, handed to the Gentiles, scourged, crucified, buried—and then rise again on the third day.

It was an incredible collection of prophecies, a sermon topic all its own! But notice that crucial destination: “I will go before you to Galilee.”

Why Galilee? The word itself stems from the Hebrew verb galal, which means “to roll” or “to encircle.” It implies a revolving, a rotation, like a wheel turning. It speaks of a revolution—coming full circle.

In simple terms, “coming full circle” is when a person, thing, or situation revolves and returns to its original state or place, yet often in a new condition.

The Significance of the Circle

Galilee was that region for Jesus. Think of Galilee like a state, containing many cities—Nazareth, Capernaum, Bethsaida, Cana, Magdala, Tiberias. It was a central hub for His life and ministry.

It was in Nazareth of Galilee that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary with the announcement of Jesus’ conception (Luke 1:26).

After his birth in Bethlehem, it was to Galilee that the family returned, making their home in Nazareth (Matthew 2:22-23).

It was in Galilee that Jesus began His public ministry after his temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4:14).

And it was in Cana of Galilee where Jesus performed His very first miracle, turning water into wine.

Of that first miracle, John records:

"This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory..." (John 2:11) [^4]

The glory—the outshining of God’s essence—was made manifest through Jesus right there in Galilee.

But Galilee held another critical piece of the puzzle. It was the site of the original calling of the central figures of His inner circle: Peter, James, and John.

Luke 5 recounts that original call. Jesus was standing by the Sea of Galilee, the crowd pressing in. He sees two boats and climbs into Simon Peter’s, asking him to push out a bit so He can teach the multitude. When He finishes teaching, Jesus turns to Peter with a perplexing command:

"Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." (Luke 5:4) [^5]

Imagine Peter’s internal reaction! He’s the professional fisherman. Jesus is a carpenter and rabbi. Peter answers respectfully:

"Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing..." (Luke 5:5) [^6]

"Master, we know this lake. We know when the fish bite, and we’ve been out all night. We haven’t caught a single minnow. But..."

"...nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." (Luke 5:5) [^7]

It was a step of simple obedience. And when they obeyed, what happened? The catch was so massive that their nets began to break! They had to signal their partners, James and John, in the other boat to help, and both boats were filled with fish to the point of sinking!

Peter’s reaction to this miraculous breakthrough is telling. He doesn’t cheer; he falls down.

"...he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'" (Luke 5:8) [^8]

He saw the power that was not from this world. He moved from calling Jesus "Master" to calling Him "Lord," recognizing his own unworthiness in the presence of the Divine. But Jesus reassures him with a new commission:

"Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." (Luke 5:10) [^9]

Jesus changed their vocation! He wasn't interested in their ability to catch fish; He was anointing them to win people for His kingdom.

And when they brought their boats to land, they did something radical: "they forsook all and followed Him." That was the calling, three years prior, right there at the Sea of Galilee.

The Unfulfilled Appointment

For three years, they walked with Him. They saw the miracles. They heard the teachings. They heard His predictions. Then, everything happened exactly as He said. The cross. The grave. The three days. The Resurrection.

But at the Last Supper, He had given them their new meeting point: "I will go before you to Galilee."

It seems, however, that the disciples had forgotten. Their world had been shattered. They had to be reminded.

The first one to find the empty tomb was Mary Magdalene. She runs to tell Peter and John. As she does, other women approach the tomb and are met by an angel who says:

"He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee..." (Matthew 28:6-7) [^10]

There it is again! Galilee. The divine revolution, the wheel coming full circle. The angel explicitly says, "there you will see Him."

As the women depart, Jesus Himself appears to them. What does He say?

"Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."
(Matthew 28:10) [^11]

Jesus wants them to get the message! He's not sending just an angel; He is reinforcing the instructions Himself. He wants to reveal Himself to them in a specific place: Galilee. Back to where it all began.

Return to the Nets

Sometime later, seven of the disciples are at the Sea of Galilee, as commanded. They had seen Jesus previously in the upper room, but now they are waiting. And as they wait, uncertainty creeps in. Peter, the leader, seems discouraged. Jesus is not immediately present. The momentum seems gone.

Maybe he thought, I've messed up. I failed Him. Maybe He doesn't want anything to do with me anymore. So, he makes a decision: "I am going fishing" (John 21:3) [^12].

This wasn't just a recreational trip; this was a return to his old profession. He had seen the resurrected Lord, but now, faced with uncertainty, he was retreating to the comfort of what he knew.

And he brings six other disciples with him.

So, they get into a boat. And what happens? "that night they caught nothing" (John 21:3) [^13].

Sound familiar? It's déjà vu. Three years earlier, on this same lake, they had fished all night and caught nothing. Now, three years after seeing the resurrected King, they are out there again, with the same empty result.

But as dawn breaks, Jesus stands on the shore. He has taken His stance, though the disciples do not yet recognize Him. He calls out:

"Children, have you any food?" (John 21:5) [^14]

In essence, "Hey boys, did you catch anything?"

Their blunt response: "No."

And then comes the instruction, virtually identical to the one three years prior:

"Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." (John 21:6) [^15]

This is it. This is the moment of recognition.

They cast the net, and once again, the catch is overwhelmingly massive! They are unable to drag it in.

The realization hits the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John) first. He turns to Peter and cries:

"It is the Lord!" (John 21:7) [^16]

That one miracle connects the dots. Peter, upon hearing this, doesn't wait for the boat. He throws on his coat and dives into the water, swimming the 100 yards to the shore! The other disciples follow in the boat, dragging the massive net.

The Mystery of the Number

When they reach the shore, they find a charcoal fire already burning, with fish on it and bread. Jesus invites them:

"Bring some of the fish which you have just caught." (John 21:10) [^17]

Peter hauls the net onto the beach. It is full of large fish. And John, true to his detail-oriented nature, records the exact number: "one hundred and fifty-three."

He counted them. Why? Why did the Holy Spirit ensure that this specific number—153—was recorded for all eternity?

This is a profound mystery with a potential, fascinating revelation. Remember, these are Jewish men, speaking likely in Hebrew or Aramaic, living in a Jewish context. In the Hebrew language, every letter has a numerical value.

The Hebrew phrase Ani Elohim—which means "I am God"—has a total gematria (numerical value) of exactly 153.

Isn't that wild?

John counts the fish, gets 153, and his theological mind connects it. The number itself was the signature! It was Jesus saying, "I am the Lord."

Think about it: He had manifested His glory at the start of His ministry with the first miracle in Galilee. Now, after His resurrection, back in Galilee, He manifests His full, resurrected glory!

They didn't recognize Him at first. But when that duplicate miracle happened, when that net was filled to bursting a second time, they saw Him differently.

John 21:4 says they didn't know it was Him. But when the miracle happened, they said, "It is the Lord." (John 21:7).

They saw Jesus, not as the carpenter's son, not as the rabbi from Nazareth. They saw Him as Ani Elohim—I AM GOD! The risen Christ, God in human form, stood before them.

Coming Full Circle

And what does Jesus do next? He asks for some of their fish. He points to the original commission. He is reminding them, "I called you to be fishers of men, not fishers of fish."

The fish on His fire were red-hot and ready to eat. Their fish were cold. That cold fish was symbolic of where they were in that moment—retreating to the old, separated from His

immediate presence. He was saying, "I can fix that cold fish, but I'm calling you back to the heat of the original call."

He told them, through the angels and in person: "Go to Galilee... there you will see Me."

Why? Because He wanted them to come full circle. He wanted them to return to the place of their original calling, the place where they had first seen His glory, but now view everything through the lens of His resurrection. He was saying, "Come see Me again for the first time."

The Call for Us Today

Perhaps the Lord is calling you back to Galilee today.

Perhaps you've strayed. Perhaps you've left the things of God. You're doing things you know are not right. And Jesus, in His gentle grace, is saying, "Let's go back to that first place. Let's go back to the moment you first saw My glory, when you understood that I was more than just a man and started to follow Me."

Maybe you got snagged. The enemy put some hooks in you and pulled you backward. You've left prayer, you've left the Word, you've left church and fellowship with other believers. You are retreating to your old nets.

And Jesus is saying, "This is a revolution. This is the turning of the wheel. I am calling you back to Galilee. Come full circle. Come back to that place where we first met, where you saw My power in action in your life. Come see Me again... for the first time."

He's turning you. He is offering you that invitation to return. He has commissioned you, and He has called you. And until He returns again in the clouds of glory, you are called to "occupy until I come" (Luke 19:13) [^18]. We are to be busy about His business, following His voice.

Today, I pray that you will follow Jesus.

If you do not know Him as your personal Savior, the path is simple. It requires only that you humble your heart, bow down, and say:

"Lord, I am a sinner. I know I cannot save myself. I need Your salvation. Lord, I want to see the manifestation of Your glory. I don't want a 'church picture' religion; I want a personal, close-up relationship with You."

This is the promise of Scripture: "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13) [^19]. If you call out to Him in sincerity, He will answer.

Jeremiah 29:13-14 says:

"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord..." (Jeremiah 29:13-14) [^20]

That is His promise, and I urge you to take Him at His word.

Until we meet again: The Lord bless you, the Lord keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you shalom.

Footnotes

[^1]: Acts 1:1-3 (NKJV)

[^11]: Matthew 28:10 (NKJV)

[^2]: Matthew 26:31 (NKJV)

[^12]: John 21:3 (NKJV)

[^3]: Matthew 26:32 (NKJV)

[^13]: John 21:3 (NKJV)

[^4]: John 2:11 (NKJV)

[^14]: John 21:5 (NKJV)

[^5]: Luke 5:4 (NKJV)

[^15]: John 21:6 (NKJV)

[^6]: Luke 5:5 (NKJV)

[^16]: John 21:7 (NKJV)

[^7]: Luke 5:5 (NKJV)

[^17]: John 21:10 (NKJV)

[^8]: Luke 5:8 (NKJV)

[^18]: Luke 19:13 (NKJV)

[^9]: Luke 5:10 (NKJV)

[^19]: Romans 10:13 (NKJV)

[^10]: Matthew 28:6-7 (NKJV)

[^20]: Jeremiah 29:13-14 (NKJV)