



John 21:19-25
“You Follow Me”

19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

20 Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

21 Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"

22 Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

23 Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"

24 This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Parents have you ever told your children to do something, and then their immediate reaction is to turn around and point to their siblings and say “but what about them?” It’s funny, isn’t it how they are suddenly concerned to find out what will happen to others when we’ve been told to do something.

Peter had just been told about how difficult his calling was going to be, and he was told to follow Jesus. Here you have a book-end to Peter’s first call.

Mark 1:16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

17 Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

18 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

But knowing that John had been following he asks WHAT ABOUT HIM? And the answer he gets from Jesus is in essence, that’s not your business Peter. Regardless of what happens to HIM, YOUR calling is to obey. Your calling is to follow me.

Peter and John have different futures, not all Christians are called to the same life. Both will serve the Lord, both will write scripture, both will help to plant and nurture churches, one will be called to the Martyrs Crown, while the other would live a long life.

John’s future is Christ’s business, no one else’s.

Now while that in itself would be a potent lesson for all Christians, John has another reason for recording it, namely in the years that had passed between Christ saying what he did that morning, and

John writing His gospel, a misunderstanding of Christ's words had arisen in the Christian community. And so John wants to deal with that error.

This is one of the reasons that scripture was written down
 Amazing how quickly silly rumors and false teachings can spread in the Christian community
Hitchhiker story

“Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church;[3] and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing:” (WCF 1.1)

John realized no doubt that many were already watching him, and thinking that because the Lord had said that John would be alive when he returned that as he aged the return of Jesus was becoming more and more imminent. And that once he died, if Christ had not come back, this would do great damage to the Christian faith.

Unfortunately the church has frequently been afflicted with this kind of “end times madness” somebody sets a date or some event that indicates that the return of Christ is imminent and then the church becomes unhinged. We see that in Paul's letters to the Thessalonians where it is obvious that they believe the coming of Christ is about to occur, or maybe even already had occurred, and were beginning to do things like ceasing to work. I mean why bother going through all the difficulty of planting your crops when you are sure Christ is coming back before the harvest? So in the second letter in particular Paul has to cool down their “overheated eschatology” by listing all the things that will have to happen before Christ returns and assuring them that they will know when he does come back.

That kind of thing does terrible and lasting damage to the church. In the 19th century a fellow by the name of William Miller said that his studies of the book of Daniel indicated that Jesus was for certain going to come back March 21, 1844. A huge movement called Millerism or Adventism (for the advent of Jesus) started in the USA, they printed magazines, warned people, held enormous gatherings, and in many cases sold their property and so on. Then when 1844 came and went, the Adventist movement was followed by *the great disappointment*. Unfortunately Millerism, has done lasting damage to the church to this day, not only because the enemies of the church certainly had cause to smirk, but because out of the great disappointment came groups like the Seventh Day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses.

So when people set dates, and tell you they know when Jesus is coming back take them to Mark 13:32 and the words of Christ regarding his return:

Mark 13:32 " But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

33 "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

34 "It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

35 "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming -- in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning --

36 "lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

37 "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

His clear teaching is *no one will know, it will be as unexpected as a thief in the night*, therefore instead of foolishly speculating as to the time, BE READY for it to happen at any moment. Watch and pray!

Now the last two verses here 24 & 25 are sometimes thought to be a non-Johanine postscript (some one else wrote a conclusion)

Very unlikely, not just because verse 23 doesn't seem like the way John would end his gospel, does it?

John's words in verse 24 and his use of we "*This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.*" Harkens back to what he wrote at the very beginning, in the prologue of the Gospel, when he said in John 1:14 "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*"

His use of we here refers to the shared experience of all who witnessed these things. That it's not just I saw this. Or even I, John the Apostle of Jesus saw this, but rather I John the Apostle have testified to what I saw when I was with Jesus, and all of the brethren know that what I have written is the truth. It's like what you would expect on the bottom of a deposition.

He has written his testimony, he's signed it, and then he hasn't just given us a couple of other signatures, he has affirmed that everyone else who knows Christ knows this testimony is true. The wonderful thing is, if you've been converted, you could affirm that as well. I know this testimony to be true.

Finally on closing he wants us to know, that while this gospel is enough, it's all there is to know about Christ. Think about it. The Jesus John has been telling us about is not just a good man or holy prophet like Elijah who ministered for a few years and then was taken up into heaven. This is the Jesus of whom John wrote:

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

How would anyone be able to write down all the deeds of the Jesus through whom all things were created? All the libraries on earth could not contain the volumes that would be part of a work entitled "The Deeds of God the Son – Unabridged Version"

But that is ok, because what we have been given is what we needed a sufficient scripture, that told us what we needed to know, not an exhaustive scripture that told us everything there is to know. This Bible is perfect the way it is. And one of the beauties of it is that it is READABLE. An exhaustive work wouldn't have been, and so it would never have been useful in teaching people about Jesus.

The comment C.H. Spurgeon made about the exhaustive biographies that were written in his time immediately comes to mind. He commented that they were so large that they made better tombstones than books.

Applications

1) Sometimes, you will be tempted to look at the lives of other Christians and say “this isn’t fair” why does HE get that job, spouse, ministry, income, home, children, body, life and I GET THIS job, spouse, ministry, income, home, children, body, life! Shouldn’t we all get exactly the same life? Or ok, shouldn’t I get a better one?

Well first, none of us living here in the USA has a right to say that the events of our lives “aren’t fair” when we consider what, for instance, our brothers and sisters in North Korea, or Sudan, or Somalia, or Northern Nigeria, or Bangladesh, or Pakistan, or Indonesia, and so on have to go through.

Christ’s command to you in those moments is “Why are you looking at their life? That’s not your business. You Follow Me.” Jesus tells you that your business every day, is to die to self, take up your cross and follow him. And to trust HIM that the path HE takes you will be the best path for you. Your job, your spouse, your house, your health, your leaders, everything including those heartrending disappointments and tough days. As JC Ryle Wrote:

“In such days we should lean back on the thought, "Christ knows this, and knew it when He called me to be His disciple." It is foolish to repine and murmur over the troubles of those whom we love. We should rather fall back on the thought that all is well done. It is useless to fret and be rebellious, when we ourselves have bitter cups to drink. We should rather say, "This also is from the Lord--He foresaw it, and would have prevented it, if it had not been for my good." Happy are those who can enter into the spirit of that old saint, who said, "I have made a covenant with my Lord, that I will never take amiss anything that He does to me." We may have to walk sometimes through rough places, on our way to heaven. But surely it is a comforting, soothing reflection, "Every step of my journey was foreknown by Christ." – JC Ryle

2) As we come to the end of this Gospel, I want you to consider again and I mean really thing on what a tremendous blessing you have been given. There was an ancient saying: *"Si Christum noscis, satis est si caetera nescis. Si Christum nescis, nihil est si caetera noscis."* If you know Christ it is enough, if you are ignorant of other things.—If you are unacquainted with Christ, it is nothing if you know everything else.

You who know Christ through Gospel’s like this one, and have been saved through believing in Him, have been given the greatest gift. But it is a gift you must NOT keep to yourself. Because you see the majority of the people out there do not have it they do not know Christ, most of them don’t even have a clue what the Gospel is. I was reminded of that as I watching a program the other day. It was called Bad Vodoos War, and it was about this National Guard unit and their awful tour doing endless Convoy Escorts from Kuwait all the way up to Tikrit and sometimes even all the way to Kirkuk.

They interviewed one member of the unit who was 24 and had been deploying to Iraq since the original invasion and he said *“I used to be religious. I tried praying, but it didn’t stop my friends from dying. So I stopped being religious.”* Now you know that’s not the Christian faith. That’s not really different from “I used to sacrifice to the volcano, but it erupted and covered the village anyway” I seriously doubt anyone has sat down and explained this gospel we’ve just gone through to this kid.

Oh now Andy, I’m sure he’s been exposed to Christianity, there were probably Christians in his unit. Oh I know there were, they had two Air Force guys attached to them, they called one of them bird dog and the other they called Rev. because he was “religious” and led them in prayer. I’m sure he was a genuine Christian. But those of you who believe that lifestyle evangelism works should know that after

he led them in prayer, and then Bird Dog and Rev's truck rolled right over an artillery shell IED which went off underneath them and neither of them were scratched. Everyone in unit talked about "how lucky they were."

Being religious doesn't teach people the gospel. Having someone share this, the gospel, this sufficient word, teaches people the gospel. That's why I preach, that's the reason, "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." You too, having heard, need to share what you have heard.

Acts 8:3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.