

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 340

Series: St. John's Passion - Gospel of John chapters 12-21

Verses: John 21:19-25

Topic: Follow Me !

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John 21:19-25 MKJV He spoke this signifying by what death he should 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 (the one who also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, who is he who betrays You?) (21) Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, Lord, and what of this one? (22) Jesus said to him, If I desire that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me. (23) Then this saying went abroad among the brothers, that that disciple should not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him, He shall not die, but, If I desire that he remain until 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 things, whatever Jesus did, which, if they should be written singly, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Jesus has an individual plan for each of our lives, and we are not to compare ourselves with others. Peter and John were different personalities with very different temperaments and very different destinies.

Peter was the leader, who got all the rebukes, seemed to make all the mistakes and was going to be a martyr. John, was the favorite, John got to lean on Jesus' breast and received far fewer tough rebukes. So Peter turns and sees young John tagging along (John was probably the youngest apostle) and says "What of this one?" If Peter was going to have to suffer martyrdom then he wanted the goody-two-shoes favorite to go down the same track.

Comparisons and feelings on unfairness are rife in Christian (and non-Christian) circles. It is sure tempting to gripe and growl about others in ministry who seem to be "less spiritual" but are far "more successful". Always our gripes appear to be legitimate. Mine is "Why do all these prosperity-gospel guys who write rubbish get their books published while my bible-teaching ebooks never see print!" I am sure that you have a favorite grumble as well. But Jesus is not impressed by my grumbling or by my appeals to "fairness". God's justice is far more subtle and complex than our human concepts of fairness.

"Jesus said to him, If I desire that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me." Boy that is a tough line! Jesus is saying: "John's destiny is none of your business and if I want John to be around when I return, then so be it. You, Peter have just one job and that is following me."

Competition swimmers are told to just swim their "personal best" and not to worry about the swimmer in the next lane. This applies to Christians too. We are not to worry about the church down the road, or the other missionary societies - rather we are to do our own work well and leave the rest to God.

This is truly hard when we see magnetic personalities with superficial ministries reaping all the donations while more substantial ministries are flat out paying the rent. There are times when God seems to have lost control of His Church and all the wrong folk are getting the big rewards. Paul must have felt the same when the false “mega-apostles” took all the donations from Corinth while he worked with his hands and endured hostility. (2 Corinthians chapters 8-12)

But such negative musings just lead to bitterness, discouragement and failure. Nothing great has ever been accomplished by discouragement. No ministry has ever gone far by complaining about “fairness”; and anxiety over God’s dealings has never made one hair white or black or added a foot to anyone’s stature.

“You follow Me.” That was Jesus plain, straightforward and twice repeated statement to Peter. Just fulfill your ministry with all faithfulness and diligence, following Jesus all the way. The other folks are God’s business.

“And there are also many things, whatever Jesus did, which, if they should be written singly, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.” Thus John winds up his gospel with a note that it is at best an accurate but partial account.

The Scriptures are inspired, accurate and true. However they are not a total picture of reality or even a total picture of God. The Scriptures are open to interaction with science and history and archaeology and all the truth that is in God’s world – as no other holy book is.

Only God is the whole story. The Scriptures introduce us to a personal relationship with Jesus and also help shape our conscience and renew our minds into the knowledge of God. But the Scriptures do not replace God, and they cannot substitute for a personal intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. The Pharisees knew the Scriptures (John 5:39,40) but missed God and ended up being called ‘sons of hell’. (Matthew 23:15)

If I want to learn about God as Creator, yes I look in the Genesis and Job, but I also look at his work in majestic sunsets, stars, plants and animals. If I want to know about Christ as Redeemer of course I read Romans, but I also look at how He redeems the saints I know and their testimonies in Church history. If I want to now about God as the Sanctifier and Perfecter of all things, then I read Hebrews, but I also look at how God perfects His people and His works.

John does claim that the Scriptures, including his gospel are a reliable eyewitness account: “This is the disciple who testifies of these things and wrote these things. And we know that his testimony is true.” John’s final statement opens the door to the validity of the other gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and tells us that Jesus is more than can ever be written about or understood by us.

Blessings,

John Edmiston

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