

# The Gospel of John – 6/1/2008

## *John 21:20-25*

### I. The Beloved Disciple and Christian Service (21:20-23)

#### A. Why does John refer to the episode in 13:24-25?

1. To establish credibility regarding his intimacy with the Lord
2. To recall the scene where Peter asks John to question Jesus which

shows intimacy between these two standout characters.

#### B. Why does Peter question Jesus about the fate of the Beloved Disciple?

1. Curiosity?
2. Not wanting to suffer alone?
3. Out of concern for the fate of his companion?

#### C. What does this tell us about the fulfillment of Christian service?

##### 1. Martin Luther Sermon

a) “Every one therefore is to take heed to continue in his calling, look to himself, faithfully do what is commanded him, and serve God and keep his commandments; then he will have so much to do that all time will be too short, all places too cramped, and all resources too weak (243).”

b) When we stray from God’s command, and attempt to serve him apart from his calling, it leads to idolatry.

#### D. John Corrects Misinterpretations of his Calling

1. It seems, from the inclusion of 21:23, that other believers thought that John wasn’t supposed to die before Jesus returned. However, John appears to be clearing up just exactly what Jesus did and did not say.

2. All that we can really know from Jesus’ response to Peter is that John may have a different purpose, but that should be of no consequence to Peter. Still, the emphasis lies upon the necessity for Peter to focus and concentrate on his own calling. Thus, we see the linguistic emphasis on the “You” when he tells Peter, “You follow me.” Greek = σύ μοι ἀκολουθεῖ.

3. Ironically, the Beloved Disciple will in fact in some way remain until Christ comes insofar as he apostolic witness will endure until the Lord returns. Thus, John’s account of the Incarnation will serve its purpose and be effectual for the gospel so long as Christ tarries.

#### E. The Paradigms of Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple for Christian Discipleship

##### 1. Peter

a) martyrdom/persecution (13:36-38; 15:18-25)

##### 2. The Beloved Disciple

a) witness in John’s gospel (1:6-8, 15; 18:26-27)

##### 3. Luther

a) Peter = works/outer life

b) John = faith/inner life

### II. Eyewitness Testimony (21:24-25)

#### A. Who are the “we” in v. 24?

1. A rhetorical device that substituted “we” for “I” but still refers to the author. It gives further force to the author’s self-reference. “It may be used by an author, much like the authorial “we” in English, presumably to add a sense of augmented authority. It may also be used by a speaker who is in some sense superior to those he/she addresses.” – Bauckham, p. 372.
2. Bauckham examples: Authoritative Testimony
  - a) 1 John 1:1-5 – he later says, “I am writing . . .” cf. 2:1, 7-8; 5:13)
  - b) John 3:10-13 – Jesus is speaking of things that only he can bear witness to, namely, as the Son of Man who as descended from heaven.
3. The first-person singular reference in v. 25 seems to be the determining factor. Also, the participial phrase, “who has written” is singular.

#### B. John’s Christ-Exalting Use of Hyperbole

1. What is hyperbole? An exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.
2. Even after finally identifying himself as the author of this gospel, John immediately shifts the attention back to Jesus and his glory.

### III. Parallels between the Prologue, the Purpose Statement, and the Final Conclusion

- A. Conclusion comes in two stages: 20:30-31 and 21:24-25. They form an inclusion to separate the narrative of 21:1-23.
- B. Prologue and Epilogue:
  1. Prologue = Prehistory (in the beginning); Epilogue = Posthistory (until I come)
- C. Stages: The second stage always takes its parallel passage in the first stage to a further extent.
  1. What is and is not Written in this book: Signs and Things (deeds)
  2. Disclosure of the Beloved Disciple
    - a) “in the presence of the disciples”
    - b) the disciple Jesus loved
  3. The Writing of the Gospel
    - a) first stage avoids revealing its author
    - b) identification of the Beloved Disciple
  4. The Context
    - a) First stage follows the story of Jesus and the confession of Thomas, thus, it shows readers how to come to believe.
    - b) Second stage previews, symbolically, the church’s forthcoming mission which depicts the fruit of the apostolic witness in shepherding those who will believe in their testimony.

### IV. A Final Word

- A. Believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God for eternal life, and
- B. Follow him wherever he may lead.

- C. "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ~ 20:21
1. At the close of the Fourth Gospel, we see Jesus commissioning his new messianic community to continue the ministry of testimony. In John's Gospel, Jesus' main purpose is to make known the Father which validates his messianic office, and thus, just as the Father had sent him to serve this purpose, now Jesus sends his disciples out to bear witness to what they have seen and heard.
  2. Biblical-Theological Transition:
    - a) In John's Epilogue, especially in the way that the narrative of 21:1-23 is bracketed by two stages of concluding statements, we ought to note the transition in redemptive-history from the coming of the long-awaited Messiah to time of the Mission of the Church. Most evidently in John's account of the life and ministry of Jesus we can agree that the Incarnate Word has been perfectly revealed and testified to as the Messiah. Now, his work is finished on earth and as he ascends back to the Father, the disciples must patiently and eagerly await the sending of the Holy Spirit who will enable them, and all of those who will believe in Jesus for eternal life, to bear witness to the Gospel of God until Jesus returns.
  3. Canonical Reading:
    - a) It is so fitting that the Fourth Gospel ends the fourfold account of the life and ministry of Jesus inasmuch as the narrative ends on the notion of the Beloved Disciple attesting to the fact that he fulfilled his calling from God to give testimony towards Christ so long as he remained alive. Thus, as we turn to the Gospel writer Luke's second book, Acts, we are taken full throttle into the continuing of the apostolic witness in the early church along with all of the remaining letters from Romans to Hebrews, and even to Revelation as we see the Holy Spirit guide the apostolic witnesses into all truth concerning the Gospel and Jesus Christ all the way to the end of the age and beyond.
  4. Believing and Understanding
    - a) Unless you have expressed belief in Jesus as the Christ, received the gift of eternal life and have heeded the call to follow him, you have not understood what John has written. His testimony is true; it is an eyewitness account that claims to be I-witness testimony. John's purpose in writing his gospel is no less to bring you to a place of belief than it is to persuade you that what he says about Jesus is in fact a reality.