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YOU, FOLLOW ME !

Do you read a book starting at the back? With the Gospel of John, this could be confusing. This final chapter 21 ties up some loose ends from earlier chapters, involving Peter, John, and Judas. It weaves themes from throughout the gospel, ending with a personally challenging invitation.

1- PETER RESTORED - If one word could describe Peter in John 21, it might be "restored." Here, after breakfast on the beach, Jesus re-commissions Peter, who had denied Him. He says, love Me, catch My fish, feed My sheep, follow Me. Be My servant, My representative, as you love and obey Me.

In v.18, Jesus predicts Peter's death. But first, he has a future. He will live and serve. As the book of Acts unfolds, he becomes a powerful preacher. He writes two New Testament letters, and is the source for Mark's gospel. Second, his death will glorify God. Under Emperor Nero about 30 years later, Peter insists on being crucified upside down, unworthy of the same execution as Jesus. But that's a long way off. And v.19 records, "*after saying this, Jesus said to Peter, **Follow Me.***" Distracted, Peter saw John following, the one who asked Jesus during the supper, "*Who will betray you?*"

2- JUDAS' REMORSE - What one word describes Judas Iscariot? Peter had denied Jesus, but Judas betrayed Him, which led to His death. Peter spoke brash words of bravado and brandished a sword, then claimed he never knew Jesus. Judas claimed by words and actions to know Jesus, even embracing Him in betrayal. But it was all counterfeit. Peter repented and was restored. But Judas could not repent because he was not regenerated by the Holy Spirit. He only knew "remorse."

Judas, the thief, changed his mind, regretted his betrayal, and even returned the 30 pieces of silver. But he didn't change his volition. Saving faith involves the whole person, heart, mind, will. Judas did not return to Jesus to seek repentance and faith. He listened to the lies of the world, flesh, and devil who was a liar and murderer from the beginning. Satan entered him, he betrayed Jesus, and hanged himself. So Peter was restored and called to follow Jesus, and Judas was lost in remorse - but what of John?

3- JOHN REMAINS - When Peter saw John following Jesus, he said, "**Lord, what about this man?**" Fishing partners, they became the inner circle of disciples, closest to Jesus. John followed Jesus at his trial, and was first to His empty tomb. Due to his failures, perhaps Peter fears John will become leader. Jesus answers, "**If it is My will that John remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!**"

John is the only apostle to not lose his life as a martyr. Persecuted like the rest, eventually exiled, he wrote the gospel of John, three epistles, and Revelation. But this is not Peter's concern. Jesus says, "I'm re-commissioning you, Peter. You need restoring, but John doesn't. Don't change the focus - **FOLLOW ME!** Don't be like children wanting what other kids got. Be faithful with what God has given you.

4- YOU RENEWED - In v.20, John is already following Jesus. He says, **Peter, you, follow Me!** God has good plans, but Peter must step out in faith, trust and obey. This is true for YOU too. Have you denied Jesus while others have not? Focus on Jesus, not them. Repent, and follow Him! Jesus knows all about YOUR life, your path and trials. Trust Him to work all things together for good. Following Jesus is not about position and power, but steady plodding worshipful obedience. *Jesus says, **YOU, follow Me!***

In v.24 John reveals himself as the author of the gospel, with the credibility of an apostle. He was there, experienced it, bears witness, writes it down. His eyewitness testimony is true. You can trust him. And he could have told even more. "*Now there are many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*" Jewish hyperbole?

In chapters 1-21 you see glimpses of the glory of this divine person, your Creator come to redeem you. In the Bible, God provides all you NEED to know, all He intends for you. It is sufficient to convict you of sin, convince you that Jesus is God's Son, our Savior, and to be saved by believing in Him.

What of YOU? Are you renewed in Jesus, through repentance and faith? Trust and obey Him. YOU also are recruited to represent Him, like Peter and John. Catch His fish, tend His lambs, follow Him, live for Him in all you do, say, and think - by His spiritual life lived through you. Your life adds to the eternal pages being written about Jesus and the lives He transforms. *How are you coming with your testimony?*