

What About John?

John 21:18-23

INTRO:

1. Without impugning Peter's motives in asking this question & w/o exploring all implications of Lord's answer, there is yet an important, if simple, lesson to be gleaned from these passages.
2. Essentially, Peter is asking, "What about John?" The mild rebuke of Jesus reminds him that this matter is really none of his business.
3. "Your business is to follow me," as one version puts it, irrespective of what happens to John. What happens to John is irrelevant to your responsibility to God.
4. The Lord's advice to Peter is good advice to all who would allow the affairs of others to deter them from the serious business of following Christ.
5. Further, it is timeless advice, because in different ways & for different reasons many have continued to ask Peter's question. The non-C for instance, when informed that the gos plan of sal involves faith, repentance, confession & baptism, may ask,

I. "BUT WHAT ABOUT THE THIEF ON THE CROSS?"

- A. If the thief was not baptized neither should I have to be baptized. Never-mind Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom.6:3,5; Gal.3:27; I Pet.3:21).
- B. If the Lord has plainly told us what to do (& he has), then what he may have told somebody else is irrelevant to my case. I need to concentrate on what I am to do & stop getting sidetracked about somebody else. Their situation is not going to change mine. However, since the thief lived under Law of Moses, & I don't, that makes his case even more irrelevant to mine. To ask this is akin to Peter's question, "What about John?"
- C. To some, the "what about John" issue with respect to the plan of salvation may be a sincere inquiry in the search of truth - but to the less noble it may be nothing more than a diversion to avoid the demands of truth.
- D. When God has commanded something there is something wrong w/us spiritually if we are always trying to find loopholes & exceptions that will fit us. My love for the Lord ought to be of such a nature that I am willing to humbly obey & I won't even be looking for exceptions. I should feel so fortunate that I am willing/eager to do whatever he wants me to do. When one gets hung up about thief on cross, Jesus would say, "What is that to you, your business is to follow me."

II. WHAT ABOUT THE HEATHEN, THE JUNGLE NATIVES WHO EVER. HEARD THE GOSPEL?

- A. Are you a heathen? If not, then this is irrelevant to your situation. It simply doesn't matter. Just do what the Lord has told you to do.
- B. However, this becomes an obstacle to some. To ask it is like asking Peter's question (Rom.1:16; Acts 17:30; Gal.3:22; 2 Thes.1:79).
- C. It assumes that people are lost because of gospel. No, they are lost because of sin & would be lost even if gospel had never been given.
- D. If a drowning man is thrown a life preserver but he refuses it, he does not drown because of the life preserver; he drowns because he is in the water. He would have drowned even if he had never been thrown a life preserver.
- E. We should be concerned about the heathen, but don't try to justify your disobedience by him (I Tim.4:16). For those who get hung up about the heathen who has never heard gospel Jesus would say, "What is that to you, your business is to follow me."

III. WHAT ABOUT MY PARENTS WHO NEVER FOLLOWED THE BIBLE PLAN OF SALVATION?

- A. Then does not mean you don't need to follow the Bible plan? How could it? It is like asking "What about John?"
- B. If your parents were honest & sincere & had the opp to learn the truth as you have learned it, being honest & sincere, what would they do? I tell you what they would do. They would obey in a heartbeat! If they knew & understood the truth could they be honest & sincere if they let what another person may not have done interfere with their obedience?
- C. How does whether my parents obeyed or not affect my responsibility before God?
- D. But wouldn't I be condemning my parents? No, I don't have that power. There is only one that can do that. That's up to him & it's in his hands. He will do what's right. Can you trust him to do that?
- E. If my parents had the knowledge & understanding of the scriptures & the opportunity, & the sincere heart, they would obey & they would want me to if I had all that.
- F. Although the rich man made wrong choices in his earthly life, he still wanted his family to be saved (Lk.16:27,28). I believe that will be true of everyone. Jesus would say "What is that to thee, it's your business to follow me" (Mt.10:37)

IV. WHAT ABOUT THE GOOD MORAL MAN?

- A. How will the outcome of the good moral person who never obeyed gospel have any effect on where you spend eternity? To ask this is like asking "What about John?"
- B. Human reasoning makes it difficult to think of a good moral person being lost. But, I need to tell you something about every good moral person that is true w/o exception. Every last one of them has sinned. All have sinned! It is for that, that they need to be saved. They are commanded to come to the Father through Jesus Christ.
- C. To refuse to come through Christ is the greatest sin of all. It is a rejection of God's only son. To do that & try to make it on your morality is saying I trust me to save myself more than I trust him to do it (Jn.15:5; Acts 10:1-4,22,48).
- D. Don't try to justify your situation by someone else's. Jesus would say "What is that to you, follow me." We should not try to divert attention from our own personal responsibility & shift the attention to someone else. That is a disaster waiting to happen.

V. WHAT ABOUT THE DEVOUT RELIGIOUS PERSON?

- A. It all depends on how that devout religious person responds to the gospel. But how they respond or whatever they may do, it doesn't change one iota your responsibility.
- B. To get sidetracked from your responsibility & focus the discussion on someone else is to ask "What about John?" It is a diversion from one's personal duty before God (Acts 2:5, 37,38) - "everyone of you devout religious people" (Mt.7:21).
- C. Cornelius was a devout man but he had to send to Joppa for Peter who would tell him what he ought to do. Concerning religions started by men, Jesus said "Every plant..." Jesus would say concerning the religious by lost person, "What is that to thee, follow thou me."

IV. WHAT ABOUT THE UNFAITHFUL CHRISTIAN?

- A. Regrettably, some who want to be known as Christians manufacture excuses & self-justification out of the same machinery. More often than not, when erring brethren are confronted with their unfaithfulness, they respond with some form of "What about John?"
- B. With them, "John" & his real or imagined short-comings are not so much objects of concern as crutches for their own sins. The implication is that since "John" is allowed to "get by with it," their guilt is somehow diminished, or at least ought to be overlooked.
- C. Such reasoning, fallacious as it may be, is much more prevalent & influential than generally recognized, simply because it is not often expressed until the sinner is

faced w/his sins. Then you hear about "John." Then John's sins suddenly become important - but only for the purpose of being exploited, not corrected (Mt.13:41,42; Tit.1;16,13; Rev.3:15,16).

- D. BUT, what about John? He may be wrong as accused. If so, he needs to be dealt with the same as his accuser y- & his accuser should remember that he himself may well be the "John" used as an excuse by yet other sinners. He, & all, would better ask, "What about me?"
- E. Settling this question fits all for following Christ - & helping John do likewise. "You are the only one you are going to have to answer for. "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." "Take heed to thyself..." (I Tim.4:16).

CONCLUSION:

Do you see yourself in any of these examples? Remember, each one of us must give an account.