

John's Final Words

John 21:24-25

Introduction

I will never forget reading, several years ago in a monthly publication that I subscribe to, the story of Butch O'Hare. He was a brave fighter pilot in the second world war. He was also the first naval aviator of the war to be personally awarded the Medal of Honor by the President of the United States. His story was allowed to be heard, and his bravery seen, because of his father's life-changing decision.

The time was the roaring twenties, in Chicago. A man named Artful Eddie was the personal associate of the infamous gangster Al Capone. Artful Eddie was so nicknamed because of his fast tricks in the courtroom that kept Capone out of prison.

Suddenly, to the amazement of the underworld and society, Artful Eddie turned informant on Al Capone. Why? Because a son had been born to Eddie, and he wanted his son to have a name cleansed from the underworld stain. So, he "ratted" on the "mob". The mob remembered, and two shotgun blasts ended Artful Eddie's life.

But, his decision paid off. He had cleansed the family name and, years later, his son was accepted in the United States Naval Academy and went on to win the Medal of Honor. And, the next time you fly into busy O'Hare International Airport, you can remember the war hero Butch O'Hare. More importantly, however, you can remember Artful Eddie O'Hare, who died to give his son a chance at life.

Although the analogy is far from perfect, as we have studied the gospel of John, the themes are somewhat familiar – choosing death over life; dying to give someone a chance at life; removing the stain of the underworld by means of sacrifice and death, and so on.

For the last time, I invite you to open your Bibles to the gospel by John. How I have come to love the simplicity of John's record and the Savior that it has revealed to me. This is a bitter-sweet moment – for I now come to some final thoughts from this inspired, encouraging, challenging text of Scripture.

John's Final Words

Turn to chapter 21 and look, with me, at the last couple of verses of John's gospel.

John, the eyewitness, testifies that you may believe

Look at verse 24.

This is the disciple who bears witness of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true.

Stop for a moment. John, the inspired writer, has put us in an unusual position. In his mind, he has placed us in the jury box – we are all jurors – and John places before us testimony after testimony.

What is John trying to prove? Well, look back, one more time, at chapter 20, verses 30 and 31.

Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that YOU MAY BELIEVE that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

In other words, the trial revolves around Jesus Christ. Is He the Messiah (the Christ); is He deity (the Son of God)?

Now, in any courtroom proceeding, among the most important people are the witnesses. They approach the stand, turn and swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And, of all the witnesses, the most important witness is the eyewitness. The evidence they provide is the most determinative, convincing evidence in any trial proceeding.

Notice in chapter 20, verse 30, John says that everything he has testified, before us, are things that,

. . . Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples . . .

John declares, "I'm an eyewitness! I was there!"

Go back to chapter 21, verse 24, again, and notice the courtroom "lingo" that John employs,

This is the disciple who bears witness of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true.

“Your Honor, all of humanity, I, John, approach the stand as an eyewitness – and my eyewitness accounts are the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

In the mind of John, what was at stake? The profession of faith of everyone who hears the truth. John, the great evangelist, had a passion that everyone who heard the gospel would believe!

John was an author with a mission. He testified before the world as an eyewitness.

John, the author, writes enough that you may believe

Now notice one of the most profound verses in John’s gospel – the very last verse – verse 25.

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written.

John says, “You think I’ve presented some hard things to believe; you think I’ve recorded some amazing miracles; some wonderful teaching – I’ve hardly given you anything. But, you, the jurors, have been given enough to make your decision. Will you believe?”

You need to remember that John was particularly concerned with the written record of Christ’s claim. Why? Because, as one of the last survivors of the original twelve apostles, he was writing to a generation that was unfamiliar with the eyewitnesses to Christ’s life.

When Paul the apostle wrote, earlier in the first century, he could refer almost in passing, to the five hundred witnesses who had seen the resurrected Christ, because most of them were still living. Look at I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 6.

. . . He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now . . .

But that was a generation ago, and already, a new generation of believers were being threatened by a false belief that was infiltrating the New Testament church. There was a popular teaching called “gnosticism”. It denied the reality of a divine Jesus; it

denied the belief in a literal God, come in the flesh, Messiah.

John declares, “Here’s the testimony. I’m an eyewitness.”

To those of you who do not believe, this record demands that you cast your vote now. To those of you who believe, this record develops your faith and encourages your walk.

And John concludes by saying, “I didn’t write the exhaustive biography! You can’t imagine how much I left out. But, I had no choice.”

Look again at verse 25.

. . . if they were [all – implied] written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written.

The point is, John did not include everything we would have liked to have known, but he, under the inspiring direction of the Holy Spirit, wrote everything we needed to know in order to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the physical form of almighty God. And, in believing the record, to come to the point where we recognize He died for us on that rugged cross; died to wipe away the stain of the underworld that was permanently attached to you and to me; died so that our sins, which were permanently stained scarlet red, could be washed as white as snow.

Marco Polo was the great third century Italian explorer to the Far East, central Asia, and China. After living in the Far East for seventeen years, Marco Polo returned to his native Italy. He spent the rest of his life writing articles and speaking, to anyone who would listen, about the wonders he had seen and the magnificent cities and empires he had visited.

He was publicly denounced for lying, of course, since what he described lay so far beyond the imagination of his readers and hearers. Disbelief turned to ridicule, and even the organized church denounced his claims as imaginary, mythical.

Polo died in disgrace. When he lay dying, at the age of seventy, priests came and asked him to confess his lies and receive the last rites. They did not wish him to face God with these “wild tales on his conscience.” He refused, and his last recorded words were, “I never told the half of it.”

So John, the aged apostle, puts down his pen, and sighs perhaps, “Oh, the things I could have told; the eyewitness accounts I could have given. Oh, the

things I heard Him teach, the things I saw Him do. Why, if I had all the books in all the world to fill, it wouldn't be enough. This will have to do."

So, cast your vote now! And believe.

Conclusion

In closing, let me read the verses from the hymn, "The Love of God". It is motivated by this verse of scripture that we have just discussed.

The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell; it goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell. The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win; His erring child, He reconciled and pardoned from his sin. Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skies of parchment made, were every stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade, to write the love of God above, would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky. Oh, love of God, how rich and pure, how measureless and strong, it shall forevermore endure the saint's and angel's song.