

John 21:20-25

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[0 : 0 0] And if we could turn in our Bibles please to John chapter 21. John chapter 21 and we will read from verses 15 to the end of the chapter.

This is God's word. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?

Yes Lord, he said, you know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again Jesus said, Simon son of John, do you truly love me? He answered, yes Lord, you know that I love you.

Jesus said, take care of my sheep. The third time he said to him, Simon son of John, do you love me? Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him for the third time, do you love me?

He said, Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted.

[1 : 0 5] But when you are old you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

Then he said to him, follow me. Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, Lord, who is going to betray you?

When Peter saw him, he asked, Lord, what about him? Jesus answered, if I want him to remain alive until I return, what does that to you? You must follow me.

Because of this, the rumour spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die. He only said, if I want him to remain alive until I return, what does that to you?

This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. For we know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well.

[2 : 1 5] If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. Amen.

And may God bless that name of his word to us. Again, let's draw near to God in prayer. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you again for the fact that we can call you our Father.

We thank you for the privilege of prayer. This is the means by which we can draw near to you. This is the means through which we can enter into relationship with you as we confess our sin and repent of our sin.

And turn in faith to Jesus. And Lord, we thank you that we can come to you as the God who knows us. You read the words there of Peter and of the conviction that he had that Jesus knew him better than he knew himself.

And Lord, we know that that's true of each of us. We know something of our own hearts. But you know better. What we are capable of. What we feel towards you.

- [3 : 36] And Lord, we pray that you would help us in our walk with you. Help us, Lord, to love you more deeply each day if we are yours. Help us, Lord, we pray to follow you more determinedly each day.
- Help us to live lives which are holy. Sanctify us by your truth, we ask. And conform us day by day more and more into the image of Jesus.
- We thank you for Jesus. He alone is where our hope is found. And Lord, we ask that we may take the opportunities that you give to us.
- To draw near to you. Help us, we pray, to take the opportunities that you give us to speak to others of Jesus and his love. We thank you for the simplicity of the hymn that we sung.
- And yet, the depth and the profound wonder of it. That Jesus loves us. And the Bible is the means through which we have been told so clearly that Jesus loves us.
- [4 : 47] We thank you for the cross which speaks to us of the extent to which Jesus was willing to go to make us his own. And we ask, Father, that you would open the eyes of each of us.
- That we would see clearly the cross and the cost of it. And yet, the freedom that we have in common to receive freely the grace that Jesus bought at such great price.
- So help us, Lord, we pray, to see and to share the wonder of the gospel message. We pray for the children. We thank you for them, Lord. We ask that in the early days that they would remember you and that they would trust you.
- We pray, Lord, for the young people with us as well. For the youth fellowship who met last night. And we ask your blessing to be upon them.
- We pray for the weekend scheduled in Scaladale this weekend. And we ask, Father, that you would be at work in that weekend. That you would give safety to all who are there.
- [5 : 55] And we pray, Lord, that you would know your spirit there. That you would speak through those who will share the message of the gospel. And, Lord, that the hearts of the young people would be opened.
- So that they would come to Jesus. And that they would give their lives to Christ. With Stuart and with Joyce and with Peggy. And with all those who will be there over the weekend.
- Lord, that you would help them. That you would help us to know your presence and your help. And we ask, Father, that you would be at work for your glory over these days.
- We pray, Lord, for the work of the church here. And all that we have in our notice sheets. From Bible studies to go to recovery. To peer meeting.
- To the summer holiday club. Every endeavor we pray for the gospel. We ask, Lord, that you would be at work. Unless the Lord builds, we labor in vain.
- [6 : 58] And so we ask, Father, that you would build your church for your glory. That Jesus would be lifted up in all that we do. And that many people would be drawn to him.
- And pray for the service this evening. And for Roddy as he will open your word to us. And we pray that many would come along. That you would open the hearts of all present.
- That you would speak powerfully through your word. And bless Roddy as he ministers. And goes from place to place. And be with Chris-Anne also. And the family. We thank you for them, Lord.
- And all that you have done in this place through them. And we pray that you would continue to be near to them. We pray, Father, that you would be with all of us who are here today.
- You know us. You know the point of our need. And we ask that you would meet us at the point of our need. We pray for those who are not here as well. Some who are sick.

[7 : 55] And we ask that you would lay your hand of healing upon them. We're conscious of some who are grieving at this time as well. And we ask that you would be to them the God of all comfort.

That they would know your peace and your presence. And Lord, we pray for those who have decided not to come this morning. Those who have no great desire to come to Jesus.

And we ask, Father, that you would awaken the hearts of those who are dead. And that you would rekindle and revive the hearts of those who are cooling towards you.

So, Lord, hear our prayers. Bless us as a congregation. Bless all the congregations in this place. You meet in different buildings.

And we ask, whatever the gospel is being preached, that you would add your blessing. And that you would build your church. We pray on for those who would love to meet as we do. But who are in fear and who are subject to persecution.

[8 : 54] And we recognise them as our brothers and sisters. We recognise, Lord, that you call us to remember them. And to pray for them. And so, we do so just now. And ask that you would protect and that you would bless.

And we thank you that in these countries where there is greatest hostility. We are seeing powerful evidences of the Holy Spirit at work. And we ask, Lord, that we would see that once more in this land.

A land that has largely turned away from you. Lord, whose laws, week by week, speak further into the rebellion that we have towards you.

Lord, forgive us, we pray. Give to us that repentance and draw us back. Lord, may we return to you in humility and with contrite hearts. And may we find that you are the God who is gracious and who returns to us.

So, hear our prayers, Lord. Take away our sin. And help us to fix our eyes upon Jesus. For we pray these things in his name and for his sake. Amen.

[9 : 56] And I want to begin today by thinking about rumours. Rumours. We don't need to think too hard or work too hard to know what a rumour is in small communities.

Especially we know all about rumours. And rumours are like weeds. You don't have to work hard to plant them.

You don't have to work hard to nurture them. They just spring up. And they grow. And they gather pace.

They gather momentum. They spread. And they spread at such speed. And with such power. It's almost impossible for us to manage them and to contain them.

And some rumours that we hear. We recognise instantly as just obviously and openly destructive. Their attempts to assassinate the character of an individual.

[11 : 01] Their very clearly intention to put someone down. And there's other rumours that we hear. And they're actually equally destructive.

But it's more subtle. Because we know that the truth is not the essence of the rumour. But the rumour is an attempt to pump somebody up. And John as he writes this gospel.

And comes to the end. As he pens his closing words. He's aware of a rumour that was doing the rounds. And the rumour was all about him.

And that's our first point today. It's just the word rumour. So let's get back to John 21. And just pick up in this conversation that we've been following between Jesus and Peter.

The conversation is coming to a conclusion. As Jesus ministers to Peter. As Jesus seeks to restore Peter. And help him to repent.

[12 : 07] And as the conversation develops. And as Peter is brought to that point of repentance. Peter is momentarily distracted.

And he's distracted by John. And we see that in verse 20. Peter turned. And saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them.

This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper. And had said Lord who's going to betray you? When Peter saw him. He asked Lord what about him?

Jesus answered. If I want him to remain alive until I return. What is that to you? You must follow me. Because of this.

The rumour spread among the brothers. That this disciple would not die. So there's this rumour.

[13 : 04] And John is aware of. That John is the focus on. And. There's two things to note about the rumour. And the first thing to note. Is that the rumour was not true.

As so many rumours that we do hear. This rumour was not true. And John is at pains. To communicate the fact. That this rumour.

Even though it's going around the place. It's not true. John makes that clear. In verse 23. He says in verse 23. Speaking of the rumour.

It spread among the brothers. That this disciple would not die. But. Jesus did not say. That he would not die. He only said. If I want him to remain alive. Until I return.

What. Is that. To you? The rumour was not true. And we know that. As we listen back to the conversation. We have the. The record of this conversation.

[14 : 01] And as we. Scan back through the verses. We can hear. What Jesus says. We can hear. How Peter. Is. Is. Is. Listening. And he's responding. And we know.

From this conversation. Listening back. That. What has been rumoured. Is not true. Jesus did not say. That John. Would not die. We know that looking back.

And we know that. If we. Take. This point. Then we look forward. Because we can go through the. The. The Bible. And we can see. And track. John's progress.

John. Goes from here. He continues to follow Christ. As does Peter. They're on different courses. As Jesus had predicted. And. John.

He ministers. In a more peaceful. Environment than Peter. He's an emphasis. For a long time. And John. In his. In his old years.

[14 : 55] He. Is arrested. He. Is taken. To. The isle of Patmos. Where he's. On exile. And on that isle.

At a. Ripe old age. He dies. So the rumour. Was not true. Rumour.

Rumour. Always travel. Don't they. At a greater pace. Than the truth. It's a very practical point here. As we have to watch our words. What we say.

How we say things. And. How we respond. To things. When we. Hear them. This rumour. Was not true. The truth.

Of the conversation. That was being. Whispered about. Was that. Peter. Who had fallen. So badly. And so disgracefully.

[15 : 53] And so publicly. Peter. Who was flat. On his face. Down. Was lifted up. By Jesus. So tenderly. And so thoroughly.

Restored. And recommissioned. That was the truth. Of the conversation. The truth. Of the conversation. Centred on the amazing. Grace.

And mercy. And love. Of Christ. Christ. Who had enabled. Peter. To repent. And be forgiven. And be restored. That was the truth.

But apparently. The truth. Didn't seem to be. Travelling. At high speed. In order. To glorify. Jesus. But the rumour.

Was rampant. And the rumour. Subtly. Actually. Sought to take the focus. Of Christ. And place the focus.

[16 : 54] On John. And so John. Refutes it. He bats it. Away. As quickly.

And as. Clearly. As he possibly can. He makes clear. That this may. Be a rumour. But it's not true. And the reasons. Why he does that.

We'll. We'll give some thought. To in the next few minutes. But in the first instance. As we. Consider. The rumour. That John alerts us to. We know. The fact. That it was.

Not true. The second thing. To note. About this rumour. Is that it was true. That doesn't sound. Too Irish. This rumour.

It was true. Ultimately. Because. Yes. John died. Physically. John. Is not still wandering around. In Israel.

[17 : 49] Age. 2000 and something. He did die. He wasn't. Translated. Directly. Into heaven. Like Elijah. Or Enoch. John. Died. But.

Ultimately. And eternally. John lived. And John lives. Remember the words of Jesus. That John records for us. In John chapter 11.

As Jesus. Is ministering to Lazarus. As he brings Lazarus. Back to life. Jesus. Says in John 11. 25 and 26. I am the resurrection.

And the life. He who believes in me. Will live. Even though he dies. And whoever lives. And believes in me. Will never die. Do you believe this?

Asks Jesus. And John did. Believe this. And so.

[18 : 46] Although he died. Physically. On the Isle of Patmos. Ultimately. He. He never died. Spiritually.

Eternally. He did not die. He did not go on. To the second. Death. And that's. The. The wonderful promise.

Of God. Not just for John. But for all. Who believe. For all. Who believe. There. There. There is eternal life.

We do not die. For all. Who believe. In Jesus. We can. Say. Death. Death. Death. Has no hold on us. Death.

May. Seek to grasp us. In that physical sense. But we pass through. Because. Jesus. Is with us. So we don't die. For those.

[19 : 47] Who believe. In Jesus. We are aware. Of. A lost eternity. We're aware. Of hell. But we know. That we're not going there. Because we believe.

In Jesus. We're here. In the essence. And sometimes. Sing don't we. No. No. Uh. No fear. In death.

No guilt. In life. No fear. In death. Hebrew. This is the power. Of Christ. In me. In me.

For John's. Rumor. That he would not die. ultimately, eternally, gloriously it was true just yesterday it was two years to the day that we lost Dunda we love to see Dunda with us in the congregation but it's two years yesterday since Dunda died so Dunda died professing that he believed in Jesus and that changes everything that brings comfort, that brings hope that brings hope that is unshakable for us and as we think about and as we grieve for loved ones who died over many years but who died professing in Christ we know that the rumour that John was the centre of actually is true not just of John but of all who believe they do not die they die physically but they do not die eternally so praise the Lord for that if you think about loved ones that they've lost over the years they spoke about the faith they had in Christ praise the Lord for the truth of the gospel there's the rumour the second point to note here is the reputation

John's reputation there's some people and they're always in their background even in the church here I'm always standing up at the front you see me I often wish you didn't but there's many people who do a whole lot of things in the church you never see them I see the evidence of the work they're doing I occasionally catch a glimpse of them but if they can at all avoid it you won't see them they work hard they're diligent and the work they do is immensely important but they almost go unnoticed it's like that bird the corn crake I remember when I used to walk over in this over to the beach you'd forever be hearing this bird the corn crake I never yet seen one it's always there you hear it you're aware it's in the area but you never see it John is something of a corn crake you know his gospel as we've gone through it it's so rich it's so it's so precious it's such a masterpiece such a high point in scripture and yes the spirit of God enabled him and inspired him to write this

[23 : 23] John's words were brought into perfect alignment with what the spirit wanted him to do but John is involved in this work God uses John in such an amazing way and yet John is very rarely seen in his gospel almost never seen in his gospel one of the programs that the girls watch has got a really catchy annoying theme tune that gets in your head and it goes round and round not going to sing it but the words are hallow world this is me look at me and as it was in my head and as I was hearing it in the background I was thinking that may be a theme tune to I think it's Saddle Club or some horse program it's certainly not a theme tune to John's gospel hallow world this is me it's not a song that that John would would be singing

John would not be singing hallow world this is me John would be singing hallow world this is Jesus I want you to know about Jesus I want you to look at Jesus John chapter 1 it's all set out from the beginning behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world look at Jesus it's a band in the 1990s the Stone Roses and the song that they probably came to greatest fame over the first song that they broke through with was a song the title was I Want to Be Adored it was a statement of an ambition I want to be adored John's gospel is not a work where John wants to be adored by his readership

John wants Christ to be adored by those who read John's gospel is all about Jesus not about John John's reputation he doesn't care a whit about he's only interested in lifting up Christ and John set such a a good example for us if we're Christians what is our life about?

it's not about you it's not about me but it's about Jesus for me to live said Paul is Christ John Stott wrote a book I think it was in the 70s entitled Christian Counter Culture and the Christian life is always running counter to the culture and today this teaching is so counter to the spirit of this age this age says look at me I want you to look at me I want to win the X Factor so my name will be up on lights and people will run around after me with TV cameras and everyone will adore me this counter culture that we are called to is is the antithesis of that we constantly are seeing people rising up in their aspirations to be the next reality TV show star look at me

I want my 15 minutes when the whole world is looking at me and even more subtly you know with our phones and our social media we put up Facebook posts and Instagram things and Twitter all these different mediums and the whole purpose of it very often is to try and get more likes and more shares and more attention than anyone else's stuff look at me world what's the spirit of this age and the Christian I must be resistant to that I must be aware of that because John certainly was put yourself in John's shoes for a moment think about how your mind may work if you were John at this point think about the fact that you are hearing that there is a rumour circulating and it's all about you everybody's talking about you and what they're saying is you are so spiritual and so loved by

[28 : 28] Jesus that Jesus said you're not going to die that's the rumour Peter's going to die but John's not going to die John actually is elevated somewhat above Peter in the substance of this rumour now that's the kind of rumour it's kind of flattering that's the kind of rumour that gets people interested in you that's the kind of rumour that turns you into something of a spiritual celebrity for a period it's the kind of rumour that fills your church it's the kind of rumour that gets you on television maybe a book deal or two gets you invited to all the big conferences that's the kind of rumour that many people if it was about them they may not be in a huge rush to dismiss it because it turbo charges their reputation but John instantly refutes it because he doesn't want people looking at him he wants people looking at Jesus he's not interested in his own reputation he's interested in Jesus he's interested singularly in a relationship with Jesus we sang here last Sunday riches

I heed not nor man's empty praise thou Jesus mine inheritance now and always be thou Jesus my vision that's John's mindset he's not interested in the empty praise of men and women through the generations he wants people looking past him and on to see Christ he's not interested in his reputation he's interested in a relationship with Christ that's the third point we've got the rumor we have the reputation of John which he's not interested in his reputation he's interested in a relationship with Jesus that's the thing that helps us to understand what keeps John so steady that's what helps us to understand why John is not interested in being in the spotlight he's not interested in having his own accolades he's not looking for any credit for this letter because he's just interested in a relationship with Christ the key to this is just in how we listen to John as he refers to himself look at verse 20 when John refers to himself just in verse 20 when Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following him doesn't even use his own name

John doesn't write I was following with my notebook my pad because I was gathering intelligence to be able to write this gospel John is at pains not to speak about himself Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them and that's always the phrase that John uses to speak of himself he was the disciple whom Jesus loved now we know that Jesus loved all the disciples but John is simply interested in the fact that Jesus loved him six times when speaking of himself in the gospel that's the phrase he uses the disciple whom Jesus loved and that's significant and that tells us the only really important thing to John is that Jesus loved him that's why he's not chasing the approval of the world it's because he was content in knowing that Jesus loved him that's why he's not interested in pumping up his own reputation that's why he's not trying to present himself in some glorious light in his gospel because he's not interested in what you and I think of him he's just content in knowing that Jesus loved him so do you know that and do I know that is that the old important thing in our lives do we have that blessed steady deep assurance that comes from knowing that Jesus loves us the children singing it

Jesus loves me this I know but the Bible tells me so the cross shows me so Jesus loves me do we do we know that I think this is the cure I know this is the cure because the Bible tells me this is the cure to the dysfunctionality of this world the dysfunctionality of our own hearts we see people sometimes in the media and they do terrible crazy demeaning things publicly why it's because they want people to love them but this world's love love is so fickle and so conditional and so fleeting and so elusive it isn't actually love at all and their souls and ours long for a deeper love than that a love that is finding one place only and that's in Christ who sang it as the deer pants for the water so my soul longs for you there are so many lonely broken messed up love thirsty souls in this world and they need to know that Jesus loves them and Jesus wants them to be in a relationship with him and if you're a

Christian your main job and mine is to tell them what does this building exist for this is a hub through which we should be seeking to reach out to tell people about Jesus and his love for them to tell people about the danger of being apart from Christ the danger that they know deep in their hearts and the absolute urgency and blessing of being able to come to Christ that's our job to tell the world that they and we can be in a relationship with Jesus as John wants and that was enough for John to know the love of and to be in a relationship with Christ and that's enough for every soul here and elsewhere we may chase career success we may chase the next pound we may chase the next relationship we may chase a million different things that promise to us that they will satisfy us and love us but the only love and contentment truly that will satisfy us is found in relationship with Christ

[36 : 51] Psalm 37 what does it say delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart and the desires of your heart are to delight yourself in the Lord it's a verse that goes round and round in circles the answer is in the question to delight ourselves in the Lord it is to delight our hearts we long for we need a relationship with Christ so this morning are you in a relationship with Christ that's the main question are you a Christian are you in a relationship with Jesus you can be he went to a cross to remove the sin that separated us from God so that we could be reconciled brought into a relationship with God and in that relationship you find that we are loved and that we are content with the

Lord as our shepherd so there's the relationship that John had and was absolutely content in there's a reputation that he had no interest in there's the rumour that he knocks back and then there's the record it's the final point I've got noted down here another point came to me in the last hymn I may and may not share it there's the record that John presents here just as we finish as we come to the last two verses as John signs off he does so making clear that what he is presenting to us here it's a record it's not a fairy story it's not an allegory it's not a collection of poems it's not some mythology it's not tall tales and fables for us to allegorize and spiritualize this is a record says John of what he saw

Jesus do and he was up close and what he heard Jesus say and what he knew Jesus to be this is the disciple says John verse 24 who testifies to these things and who wrote them down we know that his testimony is true so John is giving us here a record of what we need to know some of what we need to know about Jesus there's 21 chapters here full of the wonder and the glory of Christ his character and his work you might say to John well is this everything that we need to know is this everything about Jesus is this exhaustive A to Z record and John says no it's not by a long way verse 25 Jesus did many other things as well if every one of them were written down I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written essentially

John is finishing here by saying you've reached the end of my gospel but you will never reach the end of knowing about the glory and the wonder of Christ that's what he's saying he's saying the whole of eternity will not be long enough for us to learn all there is to know about the glory of Christ and the whole world would not be a sufficient space to store the books that could be written about Jesus and his love but here's my gospel says John here's 21 chapters here's my record of what

I saw and heard of Christ so what will you do with it is a sign off question what will you and I do with the gospel that John presents to us he tells us what to do doesn't he the key verse that we return to almost every week makes crystal clear to us what John would have us do he says in chapter 20 and verse 31 these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name so can I encourage you as John is encouraging you to believe not simply to be interested not simply to make this a subject of academic study but to believe it's only if you believe that you'll have life it's only if you believe that your sin will be forgiven it's only if you believe that you will escape the wrath of God it's only if you believe that you can be sure that you're not headed for hell but you have a place prepared for you in heaven these things are written that you would believe in Jesus and the post the last point that I got the 30 seconds before

[43 : 24] I stood up is the word return it's not on screen but just come to me return there's a timeline on this you might sit here every week and think well one day I will believe I hope and pray one day you will but there's coming a day when you won't need to believe because Jesus will return and you won't need faith and you won't be given the opportunity to exercise faith because Christ will be standing before you and if you will not believe in him today as savior on that day you will meet him as judge he will return and every eye will see and every tongue will confess some with joy some with tears of terror that he is Lord he will return he says if I want him to remain alive until I return what is that to you so let me plead with you else you have time else you have opportunity before

Jesus returns or calls you from this world believe in Christ and live we'll pray heavenly father we thank you for your word we thank you for this gospel of John we thank you for John and all that he did to to hide himself and lift up Jesus we pray that we would see and that we would hear and that we would believe in Jesus whilst we have time and know the reality and the assurance of salvation and for those of us Lord who do believe we pray that we would not waste our lives with self preoccupation but that we would follow the teaching here and the example of John the example of Paul who for him to learn was Christ help us we pray to day by day decrease in self and to increase in the spirit of

Jesus in us and through us and we ask this in Jesus name Amen we'll sing to conclude not mission praise hymn number 683 the words are on the screen in response to the invitation of the gospel we can even respond in the singing here and entrust ourselves to Christ I hear thy welcome voice that calls me Lord to thee for cleansing in thy precious blood that flowed on Calvary I am coming Lord coming now to thee wash me cleanse me in the blood that flowed on Calvary we'll stand to sing and I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both night and forever more Amen