



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

John's Different Way of Doing Church

Bible Reading: John 21:17-25

SUMMARY: The final episode of John's Gospel zeroes in on two pivotal characters: Simon Peter and the 'Beloved Disciple' (John himself). Peter, now restored and recommissioned after his threefold denial of Christ, quickly finds himself embroiled in his old rivalry with John. He asks, "What about him?" Jesus' blunt reply, "None of your business; you follow me!" not only settles their rivalry but also delineates their distinct ministry roles. However, from John's later perspective, Peter and John are also symbolic figures representing the 'Apostolic Church' and the 'Johannine community' respectively. From this angle, Jesus' affirmation validates both as authentic expressions of His Church, challenging the erroneous notion of a single legitimate form of the New Testament Church. Instead, John's Gospel climaxes with Jesus validating the Johannine community. This Gospel offers glimpses of its unique, non-hierarchical, Spirit-led, egalitarian form; delving deeper, we will uncover further facets of John's 'alternative Church' portrayed in his other writings (1-3 John).

Peter Restored & Recommissioned (21:17-19)

- A. Forgiven (Restored): "*Do you love Me?*" (3x) (21:17)
- B. Feed (Recommissioned): "*Feed/shepherd My lambs/sheep*" (21:17b)
- C. Future Martyr's Death: "*When you are old...*" (21:18-19)
- D. Focus: "*Follow me*" (21:19b)

Peter's Rivalry Resolved & Restricted (21:20-22)

- A. Reemerging Rivalry: Comparison – Competition – Rivalry: "*What about him?*" (21:21)
- B. Restricted: "*What is that to you?*" (21:22) ('None of your business!')
- C. Rivalry Resolved (~AD 30)
- D. Re-Focus: "*You* (sing.) *follow Me!*" (21:22b)

The 'Beloved Disciple' (John) (21:2024)

- A. Following (21:20b)
- B. Future – lifelong following during a long life (21:22a, 23)
- C. Functions:
 1. Testifying – “*This is the disciple who testifies these things*” (21:24a)
 2. Writing – “*who wrote them down*” (21:24b) John's Gospel & Letters (1-3 John)
 3. Shepherding “*the brothers & sisters*” (21:23a) – the Johannine community
 4. Correcting the false rumor – “*If...*” (21:23b)

Resolution: Peter & John Representing Church Alternatives

- A. The Time Perspective – AD 30 vs. AD 90 (21:23)
 - B. Peter & the Beloved Disciple as Representative Figures
 1. Peter – Represents the 'Apostolic Church,'
 2. Beloved Disciple – Represents the Johannine Community
- Rapprochement between Peter & the Beloved Disciple

The Johannine Community – Where's the Evidence?

John's Church: A Different Way of Doing Church

- A. Mistake to assume only one way of doing Church
- B. Different Way of Doing Church
 1. Sense of Distinct Identity
 2. Different way of proclaiming the Gospel
 3. Different form of Church Leadership & Governance (No 'apostles,' 'church elders,' 'deacons, etc.)
 4. Non-Hierarchical, Spirit-led Community
 5. Egalitarian Fellowship; “*multi-ethnic, socially variegated & all-inclusive community*”
 6. Counter-trend to Increasing Institutionalization
 7. Johannine Community acknowledges Petrine Christianity, but stands separately alongside
 8. In Ephesus, John's Community recognizes Pauline Christianity, but remains separate

Applications