

Biblical Notes — John 21:20-23

20-23 – Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" [21] So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" [22] Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" [23] Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" (20. Ἐπιστραφεὶς ὁ Πέτρος βλέπει τὸν μαθητὴν ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀκολουθοῦντα, ὃς καὶ ἀνέπεσεν ἐν τῷ δεῖπνῳ ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπεν· κύριε, τίς ἐστὶν ὁ παραδιδούς σε; 21. τοῦτον οὖν ἰδὼν ὁ Πέτρος λέγει τῷ Ἰησοῦ· κύριε, οὗτος δὲ τίς; 22. λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἐὰν αὐτὸν θέλω μένειν ἕως ἔρχομαι, τί πρὸς σέ; σύ μοι ἀκολουθήσεις. 23. ἐξῆλθεν οὖν οὗτος ὁ λόγος εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὅτι ὁ μαθητὴς ἐκεῖνος οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει· οὐκ εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει ἀλλ'· ἐὰν αὐτὸν θέλω μένειν ἕως ἔρχομαι, τί πρὸς σέ)

This passage is a conversation between Peter and Jesus about John [the disciple whom Jesus loved]. Peter asks a question about John to Jesus, "Lord what about this man"? Jesus uses hyperbolic language and says "if I want him to remain until I come, what is it to you?". He says, even if I wanted him to remain here until my 2nd coming, what would that matter to you? Meaning that Peter's focus returned to the temporal, and he was focused upon that which had no relevance at this time. His focus was to follow Jesus, and that meant obedience to him and his commands, and not to worry about his plans for John.

"Jesus' reference to his return is one of the few clear allusions to the Second Coming in this Gospel. The use here is hyperbolic, for it marks the utmost point to which the beloved disciple could survive and remain active."

—— The Expositor's Commentary, (Zondervan, Volume 9, 1981), 202-203.