

## WHAT IS THAT TO YOU?

**“If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?” (John 21:23)**

The story before us is quite simple. Peter, in spite of being warned, denied Christ three times. Now he has been called upon to confess Christ three times. (It is interesting that both the denials, and the confessions, were done by a fire.) Finally Peter pointed at John and tried to change the subject by saying: “What about him?” Jesus answered: “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” (John 21:22)

Yes, the message is simple. God did not give Peter the right to sit in judgement on John’s behavior? Peter needed to mind his own business before telling anyone else how to live. What John did or did not do was between him and God. Peter needed to focus on following the leading of God in his own life before telling anybody else how to live. In retrospect, as you know, Peter had just made a mess of his own life and denied Christ three times. Peter did not have the right to play God, and neither do we.

When discussing the theological debates about eating habits and holy days Paul pointed out the same principle. He said: “each of us will give an account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12). We are specifically commanded not to sit in judgement upon someone else’s servant because to his own master he will stand or fall (Rom. 14:4). Yes! All of us need to mind our own business!

This Biblical principle has many applications and probably should be used every day of our lives. Consider, for example, other theological debates. Let’s illustrate this with the never ending dispute about predestination. Two opposing points of view are often associated with the names of John Calvin, and Jacobus Arminius. Obviously the controversy raged before either of these men were born. People in every generation have tried to play God and question His decisions. Unfortunately, we are no closer to solving this dilemma today than we were a thousand years ago.

Moses and Aaron lived 1,500 years before Christ. It would have been easy for them to have questioned God and His Sovereign decisions. They could have gathered a quorum of theologians and debated the same questions that troubled Calvin and Arminius. As you know, they were not permitted to do this. They were not granted the luxury of engaging in such endless controversies. God commanded Moses: “go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.” (Ex. 3:10). Moses had his plate full without playing God. It was not within his purview to question why the Hebrews had to suffer or what role Aaron was to play in their release. The Sovereign of the universe gave him a command and it would have been foolish and irresponsible for him to disregard the commandment of God and start debating the issues at hand.

Pick your own Bible hero and the advice of Jesus is still relevant. Whether it be Job, Noah, Daniel, or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, none of these men had the right to question God or sit in judgment on someone else’s conduct. Job said it succinctly, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15). The minute the wicked one beguiles us into losing focus on our own responsibilities he has gained a major victory. Theologians are often plagued with the desire to know the unknowable and consequently suffer from what is called: “paralysis by analysis”.

Electrical Engineer William J. Beaty asks: “What is electricity?” and then answers: “This question is impossible to answer because the word ‘Electricity’ has several contradictory meanings. These different meanings are incompatible, and the contradictions confuse everyone. If you don’t understand electricity, you’re not alone.” The scientific debate about electricity, however, need not keep us from turning on the light or watching television. Yet, confusion is precisely what the devil wants us to face in our own personal relationship with God.

Just because the scientists debate seemingly contradictory statements about electricity does not mean that there is no such thing as electricity. Just because the theologians debate seemingly contradictory statements about God does not mean that there is no God.

Yes! There is a God and when we stand up before Him in Judgement we will not be called upon to give an account of someone else’s conduct but our own: “ (2 Cor. 5:10). When God, or anyone else does something we don’t understand we need to remember: “What is that to you?”.