

John 13:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

Analysis

Lord, whither goest thou? (Κύριε, ποῦ ὑπάγεις; Kyrie, pou hypageis)—Peter's question interrupts Jesus's teaching, characteristically impulsive. The present tense hypageis (you are going) shows Peter fixated on physical departure, missing the spiritual reality. He wants destination details, not understanding Jesus goes to the cross and then glory.

Thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards (οὐ δύνασαι μοι νῦν ἀκολουθῆσαι, ἀκολουθήσεις δὲ ὕστερον)—the verb akolouthēō (to follow) means both literal accompaniment and discipleship. Peter cannot yet follow to the cross (he will deny Christ thrice within hours, v.38) or to heaven. **Afterwards** (ὕστερον) prophesies Peter's eventual martyrdom (John 21:18-19). Peter would indeed follow Jesus in crucifixion—tradition says upside down, feeling unworthy to die like his Lord.

Historical Context

Peter's question reflects his consistent pattern: bold declarations without understanding (Matthew 16:22, Mark 9:5). Within hours he would attempt to follow Jesus to the high priest's courtyard, resulting in his threefold denial. Yet Jesus's prophecy 'thou shalt follow me afterwards' was fulfilled: Peter died as a martyr in Rome circa AD 64-67, following his Lord in both life and death.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Peter's impulsive question reveal his incomplete understanding of Jesus's mission?
2. What does Jesus mean that Peter will 'follow me afterwards'—both in faithful ministry and eventual martyrdom?
3. In what ways do you try to follow Jesus in your own strength rather than waiting for His timing and empowerment?

Interlinear Text

Λέγει	αὐτῷ	Σίμων	Πέτρος	Κύριε	ποῦ	ὑπάγω	ἀπεκρίθη	
said	him	Simon	Peter	Lord	whither	I go	answered	
G3004	G846	G4613	G4074	G2962	G4226	G5217	G611	
αὐτῷ	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	Ὅπου	ὑπάγω	οὐ	δύνασαι	μοι	νῦν
him	G3588	thou Jesus	Whither	I go	not	thou canst	me	now
G846		G2424	G3699	G5217	G3756	G1410	G3427	G3568
ἀκολουθήσεις		ὕστερον	δὲ	ἀκολουθήσεις		μοι		
follow		afterwards	but	follow		me		
G190		G5305	G1161	G190		G3427		

Additional Cross-References

2 Peter 1:14 (References Jesus): Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

John 13:33 (Parallel theme): Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

John 16:17 (Parallel theme): Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

John 14:2 (Parallel theme): In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

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