Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Understanding – Week 25

Finding Reality

Day 168: Summarizing

Ok, you've given me a lot of stuff over the past six months.

Yes, we've covered a lot of ground! I am very glad you're still with us.

I'd like to make sure I've got it straight.

Sure, go ahead.

The "Christian hypothesis":

1.) *There is an uncreated being, the only uncreated thing, which has intelligence and created everything else. You call this being "God." Or sometimes more familiarly, "Father."*

Yes.

Don't interrupt please, there's lots more yet.

Sorry! Please, go ahead.

2.) *Even though this being is so extremely above our level of intelligence that we cannot hope to fully comprehend it, this being created us in its image.*
3.) *As "Image of God", we effectively represent God to the rest of creation.*
4.) *Further, God created us to live <u>with</u> God in a state known as shalom.*
5.) *However, we humans like to have control (or the illusion of it), so we reject God's mastery, and sometimes God itself.*
6.) *Christians have a foundational book they call the bible. At the beginning of this book are stories which you claim portray how humans are: selfish, wanting to be their own god, greedy, fearful, jealous, etc.*
7.) *God repeatedly appealed to people to change, through revelations over time.*
8.) *People didn't change, so God came in person.*
9.) *As Jesus the Christ, God taught and demonstrated how to live, and called people to follow him into living according to God's way.*
10.) *In fear, jealousy, greed, selfishness, and wanting to be our own god, we killed him.*
11.) *Somehow, he rose again, talked with his students a short while, and then left.*
12.) *His students started teaching and acting much like Jesus was before he was killed.*
13.) *More and more people started following Jesus' way, until we get to where we are today.*

Correct so far?

In the main, yes, but…

Good! I'm not done yet.

Sorry, please continue.

God's end goal of all of this is to have everyone who God has created as God's Image, to live with God forever in this state of shalom. In the meantime, we are in a conflicted and hurting world, striving to teach, live, and encourage people to change from ways of harm to ways of health and life – in essence practice what it may be like to live in shalom.

Right?

Yes.

So, each person has a choice: do I follow God's Way, which Christians argue leads to life, or do I follow my own way, which Christian's argue will inevitably, eventually, lead to death. That choice is often hard to make because it means acknowledging that a change is necessary from how I have identified myself previously. My very identity, who I see myself as, must change. This change is by necessity often traumatic and may be emotionally painful. In fact, it may lead to ongoing conflict and hardship as I struggle against the "easy" ways of the world, and sometimes struggle with or against fellow followers of God's way, known as "the church."

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Yes…

However, if I don't choose God's way, due to my lack of knowledge / wisdom / whatever, I will probably end up harming myself and others (unless I somehow stumble into a relationship with Christ without realizing it), even to the point of damning myself to an existence without the source of life – a living death, you may say.

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Yes…

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Hello?

I may have come up with a different reason to be baptized than to chase joy.

Oh?

Maybe I should be baptized because Christianity is true.

Explain your understanding of true reality.

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 169: Implications

So, if Christianity is true …

That means I've been blind my entire life so far and basically living a lie in how I've understood reality and the things I've aimed at. I have aimed at emptiness instead of Christ.

Conversely, it could mean that you've finally recognized where your true home is, and where you belong.

I am so angry with you right now.

Why?

It's because of you that I am considering this.

I am sorry for your pain. New birth is almost always painful, as I assume your original birth from your mother was, for you and your mother.

This is new birth?

"Yearn like newborn infants for pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up to salvation…" (1st Peter 2:2)

This is new birth. You are a newborn infant, with the rest of your life yet to live.

Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a person is born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

Unless you are birthed out of the world into Jesus' Way, you cannot see His kingdom. It is not something you can pretend – it must be experienced. That birth may, not surprisingly, be painful. It sounds like you are experiencing some of that pain now.

You have no idea.

I'm sorry. This is what dying to yourself is like. Some people may find it a sudden and dramatic "conversion", like going from a black and white world into a world of colour. For others, it is a gradual, life-long, ongoing birthing of new understanding, new appreciation, new perspective, new gifts and capabilities. A gradual dawning of the day like a sun-rise — at the equator, the sunrise may happen in a few minutes, while at the north or south poles, the sunrise may take a couple of weeks from first twilight to the top of the sun breaking the horizon (https://www.timeanddate.com/sun/antarctica/south-pole). Regardless, a new day dawns — the Son is up ☺. Ideally, it is a journey into the light of God Almighty, the light He created you for. It is embracing an ongoing relationship with Christ. It is

accepting the guidance, strengthening, and participation of the Holy Spirit within your life. It is to act justly, love faithfully, and walk humbly with God.

Why is it necessary to die to yourself before you can walk the Way of Jesus?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 170: The rest of your life

I want to live a life in which I recognize the truth of the universe, in which I have health and everyone around me has health, in which life is embraced and there is no despair, no death.

Uh-huh…

I think that life involves recognizing God. And Jesus. And the place of the church. I want to live a life embraced by love, fed by love, surrounded by love, overwhelmed by love.

Amen!

Amen?

Yes; truly; sure; it is so; certainly; so be it; make it happen; I believe it; this will come to pass – the word has many nuances.

A useful word.

Amen.

You are starting over with your life. What kind of life do you want to live?

Share your answers with others whom you trust

Day 171: Love

So, if I want love?

At their last meeting, Jesus appeared to one of his leading students, Simon Peter:

Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these do?" He replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus told him, "Feed my lambs." Jesus said a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus told him, "Shepherd my sheep." Jesus said a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that Jesus asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Jesus replied, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the solemn truth, when you were young, you tied your clothes around you and went wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will tie you up and bring you where you do not want to go." After he said this, Jesus told Peter, "Follow me."

Do you love Jesus?

I think so. I mean, I think I love the being that created all this wonder that we are surrounded by. I think I love the wonder itself. So I think I love the one who claimed to be one with Him, and gave His life for us.

Do you love Jesus?

Yes.

Feed His sheep.

What does that mean?

Follow Him. Contribute to the health and welfare of those who He loves.

But He loves – everyone.

Indeed. He wants to gather all up into His flock, to give to His Father, so we can all live together in shalom.

What if they don't want to be loved?

Do you love Him?

Yes.

Describe love.

Share your description with others whom you trust.

Day 172: Love

Do you love Jesus?

Yes.

Follow Him.

How?

Jesus frequently withdrew to the wilderness and prayed.

I should pray?

They found Jesus in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. All who heard Jesus were astonished at his understanding and his answers. He replied, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?"

I should listen and ask questions at church?

Jesus answered them, "You are deceived because you don't know the scriptures or the power of God…"

I should get to know the bible?

After Jesus called the twelve together, he gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. … Then they departed and went throughout the villages, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

I should heal people and proclaim the kingdom of God? I don't know how to heal people! I'm not Jesus.

Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth, the Son can do nothing on his own initiative, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does, and will show him greater deeds than these, so that you will be amazed. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes.

You want me to copy Jesus.

Follow Him, as best you can. Use Him as your pattern. He will show you what to do and when to do it. Remember, we're all exploring.

Recognizing that you are a unique and wondrous Image of God, describe how you follow Jesus.

Share your thoughts with others whom you trust.

Day 173: Love

This is all too much – my emotions are all over the place.

Being born again can do that to you.

It's so silly – I go from overwhelming happiness to anxiety to fearfulness to happiness to anxiety …

It will settle down, just be gracious to yourself. You are loved, and you are starting on a new life, where that love is the presupposition of your existence.

What do you mean?

Everything in this new life is because you are loved. No matter what happens, how hard or easy things are, you are loved. No matter how "successful" or not you are, you are loved. The basic fact before anything else is you are loved.

Wasn't I beforehand?

Yes – but now you realize it. Remember this always and hold it tight to you: you are loved. Know that love. Let it free you from fear of death, fear of evil, fear of being hurt, fear of anything. Instead of fear, focus on the certainty of the love which God has for you. Embrace true life, true health, *shalom.* In Christ, through Christ, with Christ, of Christ. You are loved, you are loved, you are loved. That is the secret which the world needs to know.

And now I know it.

All praise be to God.

Do you have fears? Can you release them to God and replace them with the certainty of the love which God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) has for you? Can you share this love with others? With God?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 174: Rest

We come again to the seventh day, so today we rest. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you.