

What is Jesus Doing?

THE POWER OF 'YES'

(Part 1)

As today is the first day of the New Year, 2016, I am finding myself thinking about the first day of my new life in Christ, and the way that came about, back in May of 1995. It was the day that I said “yes” to a question that I had never been asked before, but was written on my heart for all of my life on earth, as it turned out.

Yes, the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver; For then you will have your delight in the Almighty and lift up your face to God.

- Job 22:25-26

As I have mentioned in several previous blogs, I was raised nominally Jewish by my parents, both European Jewish Americans who were more free thinkers than religious, but who had raised me to live by the Golden Rule. I was, I suppose, one of those classic “I’m a good person” people who had a vague idea that as long as I was not a “bad person” I would likely go to Heaven, or wherever “good people” go when they die. That said, although I thought of myself as a “good person”, I often found myself loathing certain characteristics about myself, and realizing that I had as much darkness as light inside of me, and that often, I did not do bad things overtly because I was afraid of the earthly consequences.

I had been Bar Mitzvahed, as a 13 year-old, although then it was more about the social implications of “coming of age” and less about the recognition of becoming a man under God, Whom, although I believed “in”, with Whom I had no discernible relationship. I, like most people, and especially young people, didn’t really “get” what religion was about because of the hypocrisy, historically, of those people who claimed to be religious. I was kind of neither fish nor fowl, spiritually speaking.

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Later on, as a hippie in College, I studied Comparative Religions and found even more so that I disliked religion, not so much for what it espoused, but how each one seemed to place itself in the position of being THE way to God or Gods or What/Whomever. The hypocrisy of most religious people seemed even worse in Western Religions than in the Eastern ones, including Judaism and Christianity. In the East, it seemed to be about self-realization and in the West, about self-satisfaction. For this reason, I had become pretty cynical, and took many opportunities to talk others out of their religious affiliations (not even thinking of it as faith at that time).

My mom passed away in 1988 and so in the years just prior to my heart conversion to Yeshua H'amashiach, I had started to go to Wilshire Boulevard Temple on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, to say Kaddish for my mom. It seemed that when I was in Temple, I had a feeling of peace that seemed to have little to do with the words from the pulpit, and much to do with the fact that I was there seeking some kind of relationship with God, although I only realized that later.

So... fast forward to May of 1995. I was working in a search firm in Simi Valley. There was a guy named Tony who had become a friend who had started working there in January of that year. He was a funny guy. He looked and sounded like Joe Pesci, and it turned out that he had actually been a leg-breaker for the Mob in his previous life. Tony was raised Catholic (or cat-lick as he said), but had left his former occupation and "given his life to Jesus", as he said, a number of years before I met him. He was one of these guys that loved to kid around, and we used to pass the time together doing voices and characters on the phone and breaking each other up. Although I had only known Tony for about six months, one day he said to me, "John, I want to take you out to lunch. I have something very important that I want to ask you, no fooling around". This was very unusual coming from my friend, but as he and I had become close, and I knew he really loved me, I said "sure Tony" and we went.

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Well, as you can guess, the question he asked me that day had to do with his friend Jesus. I might have guessed that this was going to be the topic of his conversation, although I didn't at the time, but what I couldn't have guessed right then was what my response would be. This was his question (I will never forget it). "John, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Living Son of God who died on a cross for your sins because you can't stand before a Holy and a Righteous God without a Savior?" Now you may think that this Jewish wiseguy (me) would find it easy to just brush that question off, but here is the way it went down...

First, my brain went numb. Then my inner heart started screaming inside my chest "Yes. Yes. You know you believe that". Then I went into something that I can only describe as a total epiphany. (defined as "a sudden and profound understanding of something"). The Lord revealed Himself and I did the only thing I could do at the moment. I said "yes, I believe that." Upon uttering those words something happened that I have never been able to explain. I was taken back through my entire life in glimpses that made me realize that not only did I NOW know and recognize Jesus as Lord, but that He had been an active participant (the MOST active participant) in my life from BEFORE I WAS BORN.

I am going to go into greater detail about that journey next week. Suffice it to say, that the word "yes" that I spoke that day was the single most profound and wonderful moment of my life and I have never looked back except in wonderment at what the Lord has done with this wretched sinner who is now a citizen of Heaven all because of the power of "yes".

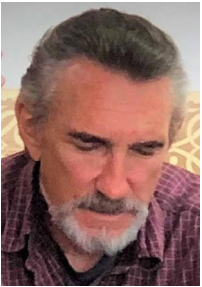
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But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said to Him, 'The first.'

- Matthew 21:28-31

Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes'

- Matthew 5:37



In the Grip of Grace, with Love,

- John Henry Raskin, Roadhouse Rabbi