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7 – THE NAME OF CHRIST, OR WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Since the publication of Alice Bailey's "Great Invocation" prayer – with the words "May Christ return to Earth" – other versions have appeared. In many of them the word "Christ" has been replaced with names like "World Teacher", "Lord Maitreya", "Imam Mahdi", "Kalki Avatar", "Bodhisattva". These are all names by which different cultures and religions represented the One whom they believed God had sent, or would send, into the world as the Savior for humanity.

As far as Christ and His Name are concerned, what one believes along this line is important, of course. But what's truly important is the manner in which a person conducts his or her life during their earthly sojourn. This viewpoint is quite evident in some of Christ's Parables, such as that of the Good Samaritan and of the Final Judgment.

And we should consider the account of what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well. She noted, *"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and you say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."* And Jesus goes on to explain that worship has nothing to do with physical location: *"the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him."* In the middle of this conversation, Jesus makes an interesting side comment: *"You worship you not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews."* (John 4:20,22,23)

In other words, He wasn't judging the woman because of her mixed-up theology. Yes, the Jewish people had the right "theology" but that wasn't a major concern. The "theology" had been encased in the Jewish culture for generations, but now it was time to break it out of those confines and make God's Mercy and Truth available to all the world. And to do that, the focus of worship would have to move away from place-worship (whether Jerusalem, the Samaritan "mountain", or any holy place) to worship *"in spirit and in truth"*.

A person's theological understanding or "religion", like the Samaritan mountain or the city of Jerusalem, also became less important; whereas one's attitude towards God and behavior toward one's fellow human beings became the supreme measures of devotion and dedication to the Creator.

So although in reality it is the historical figure, Jesus Christ, who will return to launch the new, upcoming Age of Peace, perhaps it is not needful to quibble too much about the "name". Even if we don't think devotees have the right name, if in their hearts they believe that God has sent, or will send, a Savior for the human race into the world, that is "faith" in the eyes of God, and it is something that He will honor.

But that is not what the world will honor. In 2Thessalonians 2:3-4, the Antichrist is called "*the man of sin… son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped.*" In the future any religion that honors the Supreme Being instead of the world's leader, the Antichrist, or his great system, will run afoul of the coming new world order.

Here is a noteworthy statement by Alice Bailey:

> **"He [Christ] has been for two thousand years the supreme Head of the Church Invisible, the Spiritual Hierarchy, composed of the disciples of all faiths. He recognizes and loves those who are not Christian but who retain their allegiance to their Founders – the Buddha, Mohammed and others. He cares not what the faith is, if the objective is love of God and of humanity." (Alice Bailey, *The Reappearance of Christ,* chapter 3)**

Many in the Christian faith would find this one difficult to swallow. But again, the real question is, how does God see things? Christians have the right belief system, and many walk worthy of their faith. And a good many don't. And many there are who don't know Christ at all (through no fault of their own), but nevertheless, do what true Christian religion teaches.

So how is God supposed to judge? *"Everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him… everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."* (1John 2:29, 4:7) Faith and works go together as the apostle James asserts in chapter 2 of his epistle. Surely then, in God's domain there are many who became believers in Christ at a later stage, even after their death and passage into the Spirit Realm. In the Gospel of John we read that Jesus taught, *"He who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."* (3:21)

Probably there are many worthy souls who tried to do what was right and as a result were drawn *"to the light,"* a journey that did not finish until after their death and passage into the Spirit Realm. And because the conduct of their lives had already been drawing them to the Light, they were met by the Lord and welcomed into the Heavenly Domain. Seen from this point of view, Bailey's statement above about the "Church Invisible" makes a lot more sense: "He cares not what the faith is, if the objective is love of God and of humanity."

God knows where people's hearts are at. And it is conceivable that a person from a different culture or religion could be invoking a name other than Christ because they don't know any better, yet in their hearts they are worshiping *"in spirit and in truth"*. This seems to be the thought behind the statement by Mahatma Gandhi,

> **I believe that He [Christ] belongs not solely to Christianity, but to the entire world; to all races and people, it matters little under what flag, name or doctrine they may work, profess a faith, or worship a God inherited from their ancestors. ["What Jesus Means to Me" by M.K. Gandhi, *The Modern Review*, Oct. 1941, p. 406]**

Is the Lord so particular about His Name that He would ignore the genuine heart-cry of someone from a different religion just because they happened to be using the wrong terminology? Here it will help to be

reminded of the apostle Paul's words in Romans, chapter 2:

> ***For there is no partiality with God… for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness…*** **(2:11,13-15)**

And if such folks are worshiping *"in spirit and in truth",* the Holy Spirit will lead them to faith in Christ eventually – whether through dreams, visions, thoughts, pamphlets, podcasts, books, or someone's preaching. And once a person does understand and know the truth, then of course they have an obligation to stand by that truth.

How then does God judge who has entered the Kingdom? Well, that is none of our business. Our business is to love and respect those whom the Lord brings across our path, and enlighten them about Christ if possible. It might be safe, however, to say this about how God would judge: if a person believes in some other "savior" because he or she doesn't want to accept Christ, then that is wrong; if a person believes in another "savior" because they don't know anything else, then that is tolerable. The following prophetic message offers a clear explanation of this principle:

> **(Jesus:) Many people make what would technically be called wrong decisions, but if they don't know any better and if they're making those decisions with motives based on love, or unselfishness, or wanting to do right, I honor the motives of their hearts and don't judge them for it. By the same token, there are those who are motivated by selfishness, pride, or have based their decisions on a rejection of My Word and the conscience I put within them. In that case, I hold them fully accountable for their actions. [Message received in the wake of the *Jesus Revolution,* November 2000]**

If a person has only a vague knowledge of who Christ is, then he or she is not as responsible as the one who does know. And if a person who knows very little, yet obeys the teaching of Christ to love God and their fellow-man, would not that person be more righteous in God's eyes than the person who does know but does not live up to or teach what they

know?

It might help at this point to look at something we in modern times don't understand too well: what do we mean by the term "name"?

> **"There is a difference between what a person's name represented in Old Testament times and what a name means today. In our time, someone's name is generally a label that identifies and distinguishes them from other individuals. In the past, people understood a name to be much more than that—a name often described the character or reputation of a person…" (from "The Ten Commandments (Part 2), *Living Christianity* series)**

So the Greek word for *"name"* – *onoma* – besides its normal usage for proper names, has this very common secondary meaning:

> **"By a usage, chiefly Hebraistic, the name is used for everything which the name covers… one's rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellence, deeds, etc." (from *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, pg. 47. Published 1889).**

Of course, we must keep in mind also what the apostle Peter declared when brought to the judgment hall of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling body):

> **"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)**

He meant, of course, the "name" of Jesus Christ. Presumably though, this "name" applied on a greater level than that of a mere label to identify and distinguish Him from other individuals. It also meant His extensive, in fact infinite, domain of influence. Jesus said of Himself, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."* (Matthew 28:19)

Later in the *Book of Revelation,* He is described as having

> ***a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.* (19:16)**

And the apostle Paul wrote that He has a

> ***name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*** **(Philippians 2:9-11)**
>
> ***He*** **(God the Father)** ***raised Him*** **(Christ)** ***from the dead and seated Him… far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.*** **(Ephesians 1:20-21)**

So it is reasonable to think that the Lord might cut some slack here – that is, not be too particular about the distinguishing-label aspect of His name. What really does mean something is recognizing the domain of influence that His Name covers, believing that there is a Savior for humanity, a Messiah who will usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth. This is the greater significance of what it means to believe in the Name of Christ.

Many religions have such beliefs in their mythology and legends from the past. And some don't accept Christ as the Son of God. But it is conceivable that devotees in those religions believe in the coming Kingdom of God and a Savior of humanity but just don't have the "name" right. But they've got it right in spirit at least, the more important aspect. So that counts for righteousness. Only God knows the thoughts and intents of people's hearts, and only He can judge whether or not a person is calling out to Him sincerely, *"in truth and in spirit"*.

For the early disciples, it was difficult for them to believe that a man, whom they all knew and lived with and admired, could be the Savior of all humanity. It ran contrary to all their former religious beliefs about blasphemy (for a man to take upon himself the role of divine being). It seemed preposterous… until He rose from the dead.

What an awesome realization! The Creator, our Father in Heaven, in His great love for humanity, entered our world in the person of Christ. And thus began the process of bringing God's Kingdom to Earth, of re-connecting the human race to Him as their Creator Father. For the first disciples, it was difficult to grasp the full magnitude of who Christ was until they witnessed His Resurrection.

For us today, the same difficulty in grasping this truth persists. In this Earthly Realm, it is difficult to perceive and takes faith, arising from a genuine love for God. When we trust someone, we love them. And the same is true in how we relate to God. When we trust Him, it means we love Him.

Some have this attitude of faith; others, like Blavatsky and her Theosophy, have convinced themselves and everyone who would listen, that the whole idea of Christ as God in the Earth is preposterous. What she espoused has been dressed up nicely, of course, in all sorts of lofty-sounding language. However, that swaggering tone of certainty, those words of logic and shallow reasoning, are a cover for the spirits of Darkness and their hatred of Christ.

As it was difficult for the early disciples to understand who Christ was, so it would be nowadays for someone raised in another religion to accept Him as the divine Son of God if that were not taught as such, or not even mentioned, in their religion. However, the Lord has empowered His followers with special gifts of the Holy Spirit (healing, miracles, prophesy, and many others). These are means by which they can convince and draw others to know the reality of God's Kingdom that Jesus had introduced into our Earthly Realm.

Jesus said once, *"Even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."* (John 10:38, NIV) Jesus sympathized with the fact that to *"know and understand"* would be difficult if there was nothing but His preaching to go by. However, His works and miracles testified clearly to the astounding truth He was trying to get across – that the full reality of God was dwelling in Him.

And let us not forget what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit that was to represent Him: *"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him."* (Matthew 12:32) The Holy Spirit will guide seekers towards faith in the historical figure of Christ who once lived on Earth, but if they have not come to that point yet, they are, in a sense, shielded from any negative consequences of a lack of understanding. And this was what Jesus demonstrated in His tolerant attitude towards the Samaritan

woman. *"You worship you know not what."* (John 4:22) Her religious understanding was limited, but Jesus was not so concerned about that.

In the secular age of our present day, almost any faith in a good and benevolent Higher Power is a big step. And as time marches on, this secularism will reach its height in the exaltation of the Antichrist. He is called *"the man of sin… son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped."* (2Thessalonians 2:3-4)

It's not so difficult nowadays to imagine such a world situation to come – one in which no faith in a Higher Power is allowed. Only worship of and allegiance to the world's final demagogue will be permitted. Adherence to any other "religion" will result in persecution.

We live in an age of "pluralism". With so many belief systems vying for the attention of the world's people, it is needful to recognize what is shared in common amongst all religions. Most of them are having a good influence on their followers, and all share a common faith in God – that is, a benevolent Higher Power to whom we are accountable. In the very End, any kind of devotion to a Higher Power other than the final Antichrist and his world system will be outlawed. So people of all religions, at least those who refuse to swear their allegiance to the Antichrist, will all be in the same boat and will find themselves under the hammer of persecution.

So now is not the time to focus on the differences between religions; rather, it is needful to understand what all religions share in common: the desire to worship God in spite of the prevailing Darkness sweeping the Earth.

Continue to: 8 – Dark Undercurrents