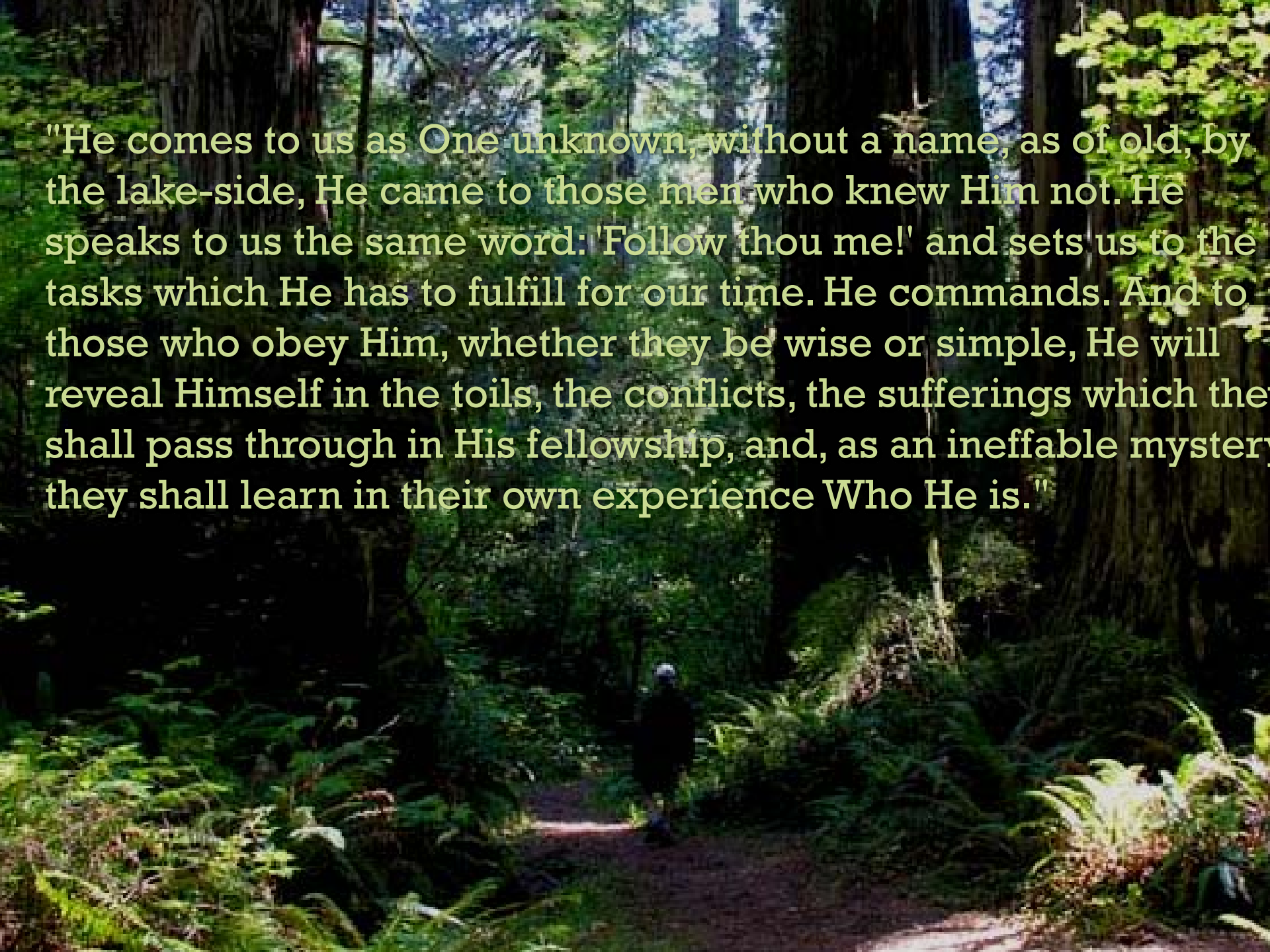


Ten Questions that are Transforming Christian Faith





Who is Jesus?

A photograph of a person walking away on a dirt path through a dense, lush forest. The path is narrow and leads into the woods, surrounded by tall trees and thick undergrowth. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating dappled light on the ground. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

"He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake-side, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: 'Follow thou me!' and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is."



















We all remake Jesus into just about anything we like. We like a Jesus who hates the people we hate and likes whatever we like—whether that's partying, fighting , a certain kind of politics, or cuddly omnipotence.



“The only reason Jesus came was to save people from hell...Jesus had no social agenda...(He didn't come to eliminate poverty or slavery or...) fix something in somebody's life for the little moment they live on this earth.”



‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’

²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant,
and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed
on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this
scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

--Luke 4.18-21

One



For Luke, Jesus' mission is to save from poverty, captivity, blindness, and oppression.



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life,* and the life was the light of all people. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

--John 1.1-4, 9

Two



With these first words—“in the beginning”—John clearly evokes the Genesis story. John is telling us that a new creative moment, a new Genesis, is happening in Jesus. The Genesis echoes resound to the end of the fourth Gospel, where they ring out powerfully in the climactic account of the resurrection.

We see in John Jesus associated with light; life; the creation of wine from water; the Spirit hovering over the water; the succession of days in the first chapter; the reconciliation at the end; daybreak ending; etc.



¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him... ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Three



John echoes Exodus also very powerfully throughout his gospel:

- Moses was originally rejected by his kinfolk, as Jesus was rejected.
- God's presence is associated with the tabernacle—Jesus is a tabernacle in John.
- The Passover lamb appears in Exodus and John.
- Jesus habitually uses the expression 'I am.'
- JBap uses expression, "Lamb of God."
- Jesus tells his disciples he will see them no longer, much as Moses commissioned Joshua.



In days to come

the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

³ Many peoples shall come and say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.'

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

The Peaceable Kingdom



In John...

- Jesus says to the woman at the well that the hour is coming and is now here... [that the long-awaited peaceable kingdom will arrive.]
- Both Isaiah and John critique the religious establishment.
- Jesus changes water into wine at Cana—abundant wine being a symbol of the coming age.
- John picks up on Isaiah's shepherd imagery, childbirth imagery, and calling God Father.
- Isaiah's servant image is the agency of salvation. In John Jesus is clothed as servant.



Even these few examples, selected from many more, make it clear that Jesus, contrary to the conviction that Jesus came merely to save souls from hell, came to launch a new Genesis, lead a new Exodus, and inaugurate a new Kingdom as the Prince of Peace. Jesus and his message have everything to do with poverty, slavery, and a “social agenda.”



Comment on this statement

More and more people are realizing that there's a renaissance under way regarding our understanding of Jesus. More and more of us are discovering Jesus as Word and Lord colored outside the conventional individualistic reduction that he came to save souls. This Jesus is far more wonderful, attractive, compelling, inspiring, and unbelievably believable.





