

It's like, at the end, there's this surprise quiz: Am I proud of me?

I gave my life to become the person I am right now.

Was it worth what I paid? Richard Bach, writer (b. 23 Jun 1936)

Bach says in his *Illusions* book (p. 121)

“Here is a test to find whether your mission on earth is finished: If you’re alive, it isn’t.”

(I met Bach one day in Dallas...I must sometime relay the story – I still can’t believe it.)

Knew when I sent this out the responses would not be all favorable, and at least be returned with some degree of skepticism. Your return is intriguing to me and I am not surprised – very pleased you would comment. Of note, the only other person who is in your caliber (there are just two) although we won’t hold it against him for being a Harvard graduate and disciplined in medicine – he retired a year ago the 28th. You would like him, his name is James Herndon. He too responded right after you did with a very short “Interesting quote - catchy but fuzzy.”

Actually there are three but Dr. Ben Petty passed away a few years ago. He taught me half of my MLA at SMU. We were studying the Gospel of John and he said to me “There are two Jesus’ in the Bible.” Of course, there is the one in the Synoptic Gospels that Paul, Peter, and a few more that are of the “Atonement” persuasion with all the “on that day, in a thousand years, the second coming of Christ, the rapture, sin, Satan, and Death, Hell, the Judgment” all spelled out in Danial, and The Revelation.

The other Jesus is in the Fourth Gospel (4G). The Bible (and the Church – mainly the Catholic) are from this Atonement theory. However, the authors of 4G promote what is called “Realized Eschatology.” This is my camp. I carry my flag of Saint John (Red and White as it is) but really noted on my Challenge Banner in Greek:

Ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα

This is “Has come, the hour” or (of course), “The Hour has come.” I am so proud of this mantra, my Christmas gift was to have this tattooed on my left arm. It looks f’ing great! My girls had a tuff time believing I would do that and will not speculate what Jeanne would do – or say, if she were still around.

This expression is the Fourth Gospel. This expression is what Jesus said. This was his theme as The Revealer in the Book of John. It means now. Not tomorrow. NOW.

He tells the Samaritan lady at high noon “The time is coming and is now here” which is the same thing as “The hour has come” and when the lady says she will know when the Messiah shows up he will explain everything. Jesus says “Lady, you’re looking at him.”

He tells Martha the same story in Chapter 11 correcting her about when Jesus will return. He says *Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις* “I am the resurrection!” The Jesus in John then tells Martha “Those

who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Martha said "Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah."

Pause. There are two issues here. One is in the nowness of the question. Jesus is waiting for an answer: Yes or no. He is asking about believing now and not in six months or in a thousand years. Here is the chance to live in the light of Jesus and have life (an abundant life – for eternity).

Second, will one then stand in the light and life of Jesus or, stand in the dark and not have life. Just that simple.

The Jesus in John with both these women gave them a choice. There was no waiting. They were offered the water and the light of His love, the eternal life to believe and follow. To get up and live their lives in the fullness of life itself.

Back to Bach. This is the greatest existential question that has ever been asked – well, next to Jesus asking THE question. When we say yes then we must walk in the light. When life is given back to us we can live our lives. This is where Bach is testing us

"Did I live the best I could live my life?"

"Was I, all I could be?"

"Did I live in the light of the Lord...this is the difference: MY LIFE, HIS LIGHT...then the reward."

Now the judgment – and I would have stood on my head and spit wooden nickels to get us to this point. Uhh, yes, there is a choice.

Yes, there is a judgment...

I must go back to John – actually Bultmann - as he says it best when confronted with God. When confronted with life. When confronted you have choice. Yes, Jesus turned to the women and gave them a choice. They could live their lives in the light or not. They had to decide.

My guess is some of us still have a way to go. Some of us are looking for the last tee box, the last paper, the last landing, the last hurrah. God bless us in our search.

I like Bach's question. It makes me want to get a better grip, open my eyes, and get ready to make the choice.

"Thus it is the historical contingency of the revelation which throws this terrible weight of responsibility on the hearer of the word. For the revelation is not generally available, but presents itself to man only at a certain limited time of its own choosing. It does not consist in universal truths, which can be grasped at all times and for all times, nor in dogma which one could invoke at any time, but it confronts man in time, it is in every case the present moment in a personal history. Should one neglect the opportunity, when confronted with the challenge of the Revealer, then the verdict applies: too late!"...

For in the word of proclamation he is himself made present to the world (as is the case in this Gospel), in the 'Now', in the present moment in time. And the threat is always present, "Too late!"

(Bultmann, The Gospel of John, pp. 307-308)