

Preacher, Anonymous1

The Bones of Jesus

The bones of Jesus, if it could be proven that they exist, would raise no threat to my theological or spiritual convictions. You see, it's been a long time since I have fretted over a belief that I can't quite understand why Jesus' death and resurrection is significant.

As an adult, I have never felt the need to attend Bible study or to read the Bible cover to cover to glean its wisdom. There always seemed to be plenty of others who made the Bible their personal business. Who was I to get involved? The little Bible knowledge I do have comes from the stories and verses I learned as a child in Sunday school and from the many sermons that I listened to, again, all through the filter of a child. As that little girl who sat in church, I remember thinking long and hard about the blood of Jesus being shed for me. I wondered why it made sense to others if it didn't make sense to me. I didn't question aloud or feel the need to pursue answers at the time. I just figured that one day I'd get it when I was older and could understand grown-up things.

Somewhere between that little girl's confusion and the me of today, through a time of introspection and growing self-awareness, I learned to trust myself, to listen to my instincts and, as I mentioned above, to stop fretting over what I should or should not believe about Jesus. I was comfortable with where I stood and decided never to sit in any protestant congregation with the pretense of buying the bill of goods being delivered. Hypocritical I was not going to be.

So, back to the bones of Jesus. I ask myself why, if I have resolved the Jesus conflict within myself, if I have come to peace with what I believe, why did the advertisement of the Discovery Channel's documentary about the bones pique my interest? What did I hope to learn? What did I want to hear from the scholars on both sides of the debate? Why did it matter, and why am I finding further reading on the topic of interest?

The best I can do to answer these questions is to say, I don't really know. What I do know is that the closer I come to understanding the historical Jesus, the closer I feel to a religion whose teachings are believable for me. The more that I understand how Jesus, the man, stood up to his critics and daily lived his convictions, the more I can see the divine in him and in mankind.

It was through my time of introspection and growing self-awareness, that I came upon a new personal understanding about Jesus and why his life was important. I wasn't struggling with any faith questions through the self-assessment but, remarkably, a revelation of understanding dawned on me like I'd found a missing piece of the puzzle. I saw Jesus as a living example of how each of us should follow our course, to commit to the inner guidance we find in being true to ourselves, how each of us has the potential to influence the world as Jesus did from our own unique place in the bigger picture.

Happy and excited to feel a bit of conviction about Christianity that I could share with others, I tested my newfound truth on several devout Christians. In short order I came to understand that my opinion was

neither appreciated, nor right! In fact, it was downright blasphemous. Against such a tidal wave of piety, I gave up what I had started, the challenge to a better understanding,

I told you upfront that the bones of Jesus would not threaten my spiritual beliefs. So why do I think that this debate matters? What would happen to Christianity if the bones could be proven to be those of Jesus? How would Christians face it? How could Christianity carry on if everything believed to be right and true was taken away? To me, the bones of Jesus symbolize the great humanity of Jesus. Could Christianity benefit from accepting that Jesus was, indeed, both human and divine? And that we, too, are both? Could Christianity survive? Why should Christianity remain unchallenged if new discoveries give us more knowledge? What if our religion is based on myth? How do we face the truth if it isn't what we want to hear?

I have raised more questions than I have answered here. But many of the faces of Christian involvement in our world are not pretty. Some of those faces are: the face of superiority; of intolerance; of piety; of political influence; of exclusivity; of sanctity; of cruelty; of families divided; of a way of life that falls short of the life that Jesus modeled for us. I would like to think that Christianity could face this debate and rise to the challenge that Jesus gave us. That is a religion that I could respect and be proud of. That is what I would like to see come from the debate, but, I have little faith that it will continue.