

VISIO



DIVINA

The Wisdom Contemplative Vision

THE ESSENTIAL SELF

The Gospel of Thomas Logion 3

The third Logion of the Gospel of Thomas stands at the beginning of this ancient Christian text as a powerful testimony to the dignity and destiny of humanity. In its description of the human condition and the process of awakening into our spiritual purpose, it speaks directly to our need (and the search for) wisdom. When we were born on this planet, we entered a state of unknowing where multiple realities shaped our existence.

To know and experience those realities is a privilege which we share here on earth, but it is also a responsibility placed upon us which calls us to begin our search. Our destiny, Yeshua suggests, has lovingly been placed into our own hands. We are here to learn and become something entirely new and different from our ordinary sense of ourselves. As Yeshua will say later in this Gospel, we are to “Come into being (here) as we pass away.”

Clearly, if our task is to search for Wisdom and become something new, we need guidance. But not just of any kind of guidance will do. We need wisdom’s strong hand and perspective. Conventional religious teaching or spiritual guidance is clearly not enough, at least in Yeshua’s view. We must also seek and find for ourselves. We must become troubled and move through our states of confusion into a place of wonder. We must become sovereign and assume full mastery of our human condition. Ultimately we must find equilibrium and rest (perhaps even bliss) within ourselves.

This path, however, will not be easy. Our confusion may be because the guidance we trusted (or the

answers we received), were not adequate or even led us into error. As Yeshua knew in his day, religion itself often leads to narrowness of mind and dogmatic error. We are sometimes given partial truths that obscure the whole truth rather than revealing it.

Where is our search truly leading? Yeshua in his deep wisdom knew it was about finding our essential (or true) Self. This also entails the discovery of our real origins. We are not just earthly beings, we are also celestial creatures and ultimately eternal. We belong to God and not just to ourselves, nor to the nation or society we live in.

Who we are—our core and essential Self—is not what we have been typically told or programmed by society to be. If we settle on a definition of ourselves that is simply the result of meeting our egoic needs, then we are limited beings and lost from our true nature. We live in a self-too-small to support the greatness and dignity of our truest identity.

This is the wisdom that Yeshua knew and taught. His view of humankind was what we might call a “high anthropology.” His sense of the worth and value of a human being was not determined by societies measures. His viewpoint was not utilitarian or materialistic. Our dignity and greatness is defined by a higher order of reality and by different origins. Our whole lives spent on this planet are to be guided by a purpose that transcends the agendas of earthly existence as we typically know them.

We are here to discover this essential Self, which in the parlance of ancient teaching was also called the Pearl of our being. To find and discover that essence is to find the pearl hidden in the sea (hidden in our

depths, enclosed on the inside, but lustrous and reflective of the divine Light). If we do not have access to this essence, this inner core, and its reflective and pearl-like light, our lives are impoverished even though we may have great material abundance.

This is the wisdom that Yeshua saw and taught. As a master of perennial wisdom, this is what he is still offering us—a path, through the ignorance and confusion, toward this true finding. His desire is to lead us into wonder, the state of self-mastery and finally into the bliss of rest.

Reflections on Images and Text:

1. *As you ponder your own path and your search, are you actually seeking what Yeshua finds precious, the Pearl of the essential Self? Often we search for comfort, or release from fear, or even spiritual success. They may not be the true goal of the spiritual path.*
2. *Do you have a sense of the Pearl of your true or essential Self? How would you describe it?*
3. *Have you ever been misled by conventional religion? How or in what ways? How did you find a path through this form of confusion or difficulty? Where are you now?*
4. *How has society (or your family, or even your own ego) defined you? How are you free of the definitions of others?*
5. *If you think of yourself as a “child of heaven” (or of God being your Mother or Father), what does that mean for you?*
6. *How or when have you felt yourself to be spiritually impoverished? Do you notice that in others? How does it manifest itself? How is this impoverishment different from or related to the Dark Night of the Soul? How might one tell if impoverishment is a necessary transitional stage in the journey or a sign of a dead end or a wrong path taken?*

7. *After reading the text several times, sit with one of the images. How does it deepen or expand your understanding of the text? What insights does it bring? Journal your findings. Later this week, follow the same process with the second image and see what you discover.*

—This reflection, text and its illumination have been provided by Alison Hine and Lynn Bauman as a means of contemplative prayer
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LECTIO DIVINA

The Contemplative Reading of a Sapiential Text

Yeshua says...

If your spiritual guides say to you,
“Look, the divine Realm is
in the sky,”
well then the birds
will get there ahead of you.
If they say,
“It is in the sea,”
then the fish will precede you.

No, divine Reality exists
inside and all around you.

Only when you have come to know
your true Self will you be fully known—
realizing at last that you
are a child of the Living One.
If, however, you never come to know
who you truly are,
you are a poverty-stricken being,
and it is your “self”
which lies impoverished.

—Logion 3

Contemplating
THE ILLUMINATIONS



