

THE CRUCIFIED SON OF GOD

EXPLORING THE FIRST-CENTURY IMPLICATIONS
OF **CROSS** AND **KINGDOM**

Rooted in
Torah



“

For Messiah did not send me to baptize but **to proclaim the gospel**, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the **cross of Messiah might not be emptied of its power**. For the message about **the cross** is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is **the power of God**

For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, **but we proclaim Messiah crucified**, a stumbling block to Jews and madness to Gentiles

— Paul (1 Cor 1:17-18, 22-23)

”

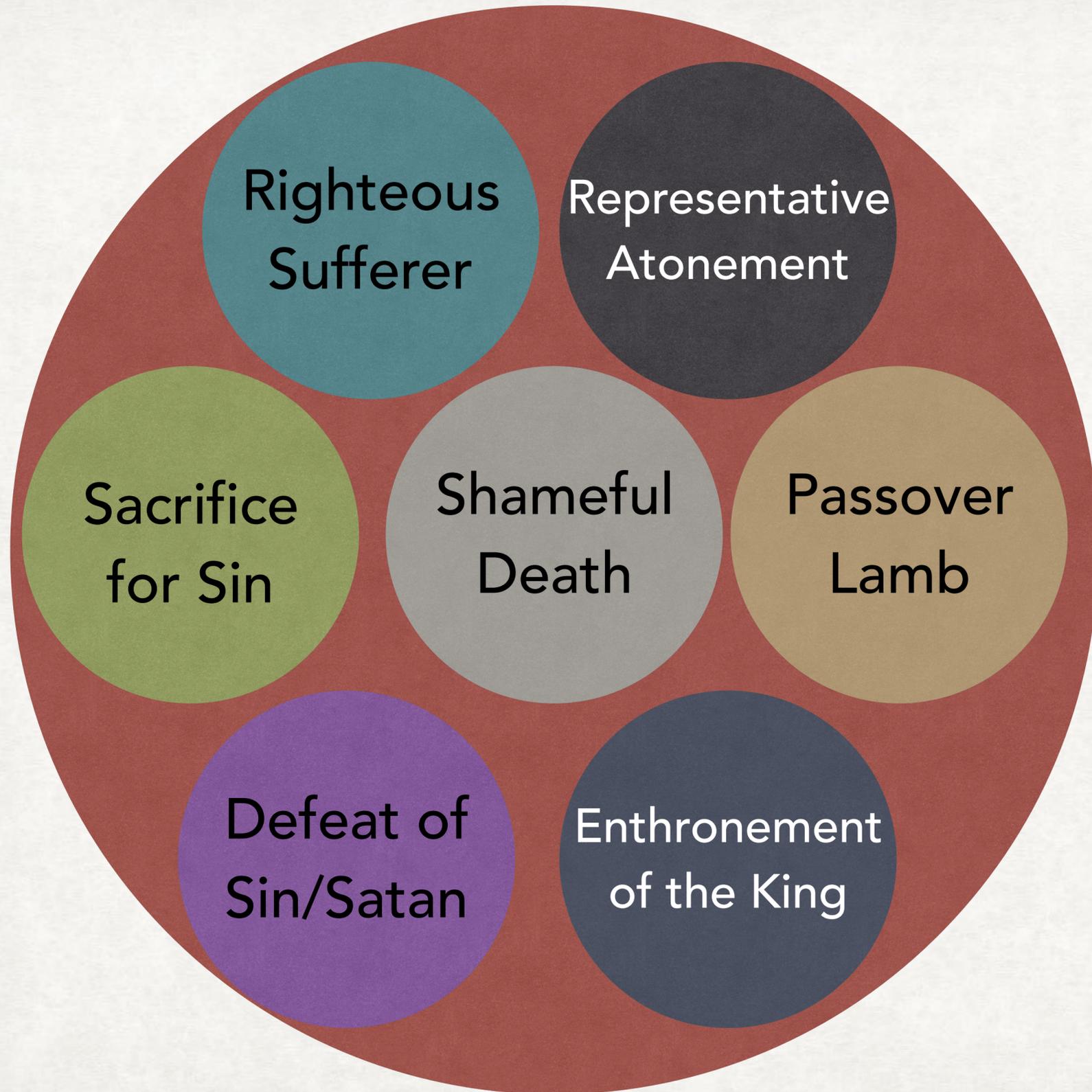
“

It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Messiah. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. **May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Yeshua Messiah,** by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but **new creation is everything!**

— Paul (Gal. 6:12-15)

”

Why the Crucifixion?



- First-Century meaning of crucifixions
- Symbolic interpretation
- What do the Gospels actually say?

YESHUA SPECIFIES THE TYPE
OF DEATH HE MUST DIE

Death on a cross

“

This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. **And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”** He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

— *John 12:30-33*

”

“

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, **so must the Son of Man be lifted up**, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

— *John 3:13-14*

”

“

Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, **you will stretch out your hands**, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” (He said this to indicate the **kind of death by which he would glorify God.**)

— *John 21:18-19*

”

ROMAN CRUCIFIXIONS

First Century Perspective

That moment when you try to explain to Yeshua how hard your life has been lately



“

[The Jews caught outside the walls of Jerusalem] were first whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures, before they died, and were then crucified before the wall of the city ... the soldiers, out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, **one after one way, and another after another**, to the crosses, by way of jest

— *Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 5.11.1*

”

“

I see before me crosses **not all alike**, but differently made by different peoples: some hang a man head downwards, some force a stick upwards through his groin, some stretch out his arms on a forked gibbet

— *Seneca the Younger, "To Marcia on Consolation", in Moral Essays, 6.20*

”

“

A Roman citizen of no obscure station, having ordered one of his slaves to be put to death...the men ordered to lead the slave to his punishment, **having stretched out both his arms and fastened them to a piece of wood which extended across his breast and shoulders as far as his wrists,** followed him, tearing his naked body with whips.

— *Dionysius of Halicarnassus (60BC to sometime after 7BC), Roman Antiquities, VII, 69:1-2)*

”

“

To die by crucifixion was hideous and horrific. One ancient historian called it a **“most pitiable of deaths”** (Josephus, *The Life* 76). One incident in particular reveals the extent to which crucifixion was recognized as a most agonizing form of torment. A Jewish soldier, captured by Roman forces in the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66–70 ce, was saved from crucifixion by the efforts of his comrades, who agreed to surrender en masse and become slaves of Rome rather than see their colleague crucified (Josephus, *Jewish War* 7.202–203). Because of the excruciating pain involved in crucifixion, **one ancient rhetorician said that “the very word ‘cross’ should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes, and his ears”** (Cicero, *Pro Rabirio* 5:16).

— *The Cross Before Constantine* by Bruce Longnecker

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“

Crucifixion was a powerful symbol throughout the Roman world. It was not just a means of liquidating undesirables; it did so with the **maximum degradation and humiliation**. It said, loud and clear: **we are in charge here; you are our property; we can do what we like with you**. It insisted, coldly and brutally, on the **absolute sovereignty of Rome**, and of Caesar. It told an implicit story, of the uselessness of rebel recalcitrance and the ruthlessness of imperial power. It said, in particular: **this is what happens to rebel leaders**. **Crucifixion was a symbolic act with a clear and frightening meaning.**

— *N. T. Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, 543.*

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Of course because of its harshness, **crucifixion was almost always inflicted only on the lower class** (humiliores); the upper class (honestiores) could reckon with more ‘humane’ punishment. **Here we have a real case of ‘class justice’**. The class distinction became particularly significant after the introduction of universal Roman citizenship... **Crucifixion was also a means of waging war and securing peace**, of wearing down rebellious cities under siege, of breaking the will of conquered peoples and of bringing mutinous troops or unruly provinces under control.

— Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 34, 46.

”

“

[Alexander Jannaeus]’s rage was grown so extravagant, that his barbarity proceeded to a degree of impiety; for when he had ordered eight hundred to be hung upon crosses in the midst of the city, he had the throats of their wives and children cut before their eyes; and these executions he saw as he was drinking and lying down with his concubines.

— *Josephus - Wars of the Jews 1.97*

”

“

After the death of Herod (4BCE), a census was ordered of Judea. This sparked revolts by Judas the Galilean and others, such as Athrongeus, who declared himself king. The Roman general Varus marched on Jerusalem to put down the revolt. After capturing Jerusalem, his army was sent into the country to capture Jews and crucified around 2,000 Jews.

— *Josephus - Wars of the Jews 2.55-76*

”

“

They also caught many of the quiet people, and brought them before Florus, whom he first chastised with stripes, and then crucified. Accordingly, **the whole number of those that were destroyed that day, with their wives and children (for they did not spare even the infants themselves), was about three thousand and six hundred;** and what made this calamity the heavier, was this new method of Roman barbarity; for Florus ventured then to what no one had done before, that is, to have men of the equestrian order whipped, and nailed to the cross before his tribunal; who, although they were by birth Jews, yet were they of Roman dignity notwithstanding.

— *Josephus - Wars of the Jews 2.305-9*

”

“

Titus felt pity for them, but as their number—given as **up to five hundred a day**—was too great for him to risk either letting them go or putting them under guard, he allowed his soldiers to have their way, especially as **he hoped that the gruesome sight of the countless crosses might move the besieged to surrender**: ‘So the soldiers, out of the rage and hatred they bore the prisoners, **nailed those they caught, in different postures, to the crosses, by way of jest, and their number was so great that there was not enough room for the crosses and not enough crosses for the bodies.**’

— *Josephus - Wars of the Jews 5.449-51*

”

THE SHAME OF THE CRUCIFIXION

DESPISING THE SHAME OF THE CROSS: HONOR AND SHAME IN THE JOHANNINE PASSION NARRATIVE BY J. NEYREY

- Used for slaves, bandits, prisoners of war, and political revolutionaries.
- Public trials served as a status degradation ritual, which labeled the accused as a shameful person.
- Flogging and torture, especially blinding and shedding of blood, generally accompanied the sentence. This was done front and back in the nude, with the person "befouling" themselves.
- The condemned were forced to carry the cross beam.
- The victim's property, normally clothing is confiscated to shame them with nudity
- Loss of power and thus honor by through pinioning of hands and arms through nailing.

THE SHAME OF THE CRUCIFIXION

DESPISING THE SHAME OF THE CROSS: HONOR AND SHAME IN THE JOHANNINE PASSION NARRATIVE BY J. NEYREY

- Executions were public entertainment where the crowd would mock the victims. Sometime the person would be affixed in an odd and whimsical manner.
- Slow and protracted death. Powerless victim suffers bodily distortions, loss of bodily control, and erection. No chance of vengeance.
- In many cases, victims were denied honorable burial; corpses were left on display and devoured by birds and animals.
- Pain was not shameful (as many warriors endured pain). However the silence of the victim during torture was a mark of honor

“

By contrast, to believe that the one pre-existent Son of the one true God, the mediator at creation and the redeemer of the world, had appeared in very recent times in out-of-the-way Galilee as a member of the obscure people of the Jews, and even worse, had died the death of a common criminal on the cross, could only be regarded as a sign of madness. The real gods of Greece and Rome could be distinguished from mortal men by the very fact that they were *immortal*—they had absolutely nothing in common with the cross as a sign of shame

— Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 5.

”

“

Crucifixion satisfied the primitive lust for revenge and the sadistic cruelty of individual rulers and of the masses. It was usually associated with other forms of torture, including at least flogging. At relatively small expense and to great public effect the criminal could be tortured to death for days in an unspeakable way.

Crucifixion is thus a specific expression of the inhumanity dormant within men. It is a manifestation of trans-subjective evil, a form of execution which manifests the demonic character of human cruelty and bestiality

— Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 87.

”

WHAT DID THE CROSS ACCOMPLISH?

According to the Actual Text

“

This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. **Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw **all people to myself.**” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

— *John 12:30-33*

”

“

Then Yeshua said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. **But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!**”

— *Luke 22:52-53*

”

“

For I decided to know nothing among you except Messiah Yeshua, and him crucified.

But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

None of the rulers of **this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

— 1 Corinthians 2:2, 7-8

”

“

It is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have **tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,** and then have fallen away, since on their own they are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt

— *Hebrews 6:4-6*

”

“

Did what is good [the Torah], then, bring death to me? By no means! **It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.**

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and **to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh**

— *Romans 7:13, 8:3*

”

“

We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and **we might no longer be enslaved to Sin**. For whoever has died is freed from Sin.

But now that **you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God**, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of Sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord.

— *Romans 6:6-7, 22-23*

”

“

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and **may you be prepared to endure everything with patience**, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has **enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light**. He has rescued us from the **power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son**, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

— *Colossians 1:11-14*

”

“

Yeshua broke the powers that enslaved all of mankind. Specifically, he broke the power of Satan, personified as sin and associated with Caesar. He thus opened the door for mission to the nations, who are becoming free from their enslavement.

— *Ryan White, summarizing NT Wright*

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YESHUA IS ENTHRONED
AS KING ON THE CROSS

A Cross-Shaped Kingdom

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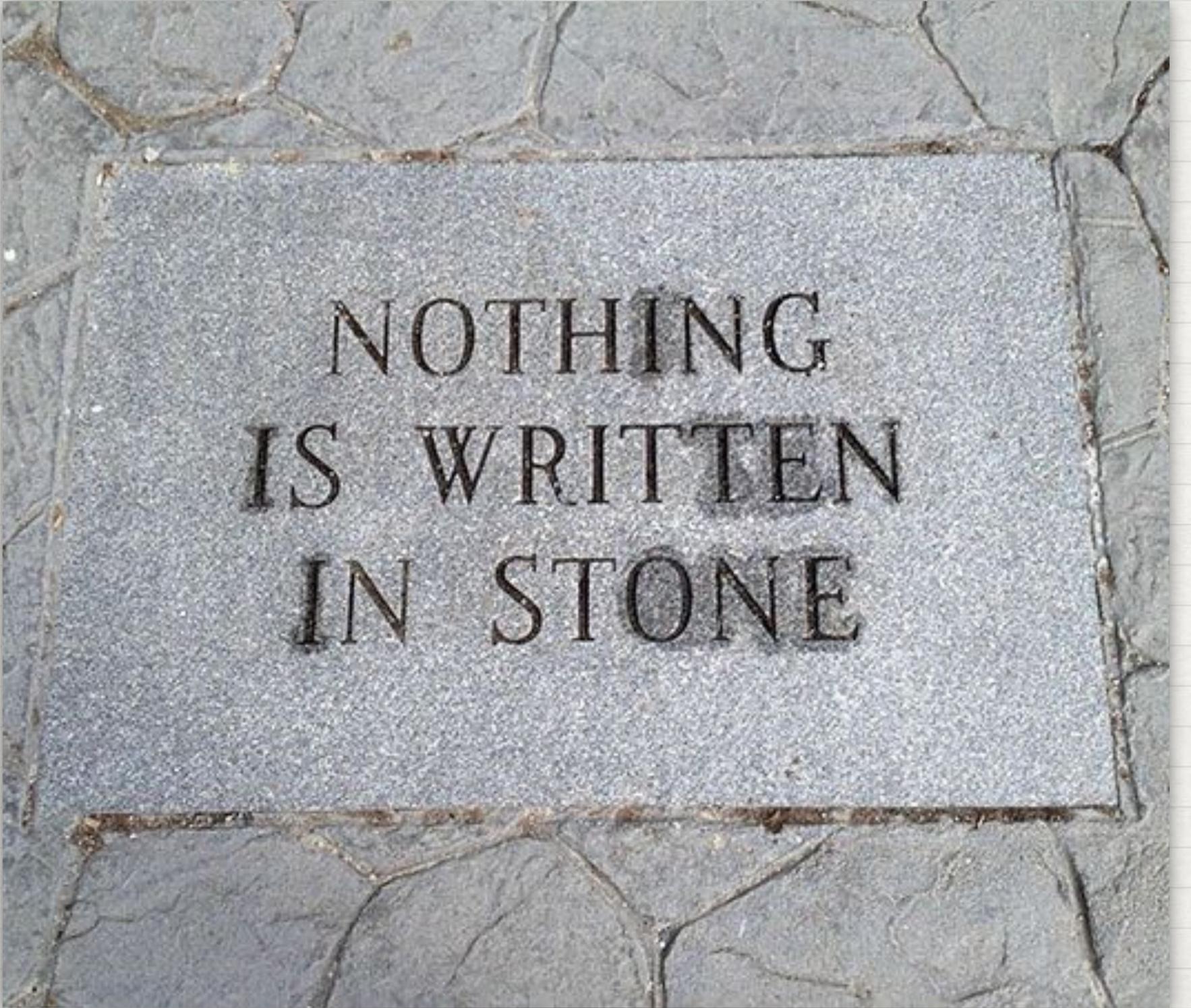
First, we are talking about a royal Messiahship. The Messiah is Israel's true king; hence also, since Israel is the people of the one creator God, he is the world's true Lord. Paul, we should note, shows no interest in a priestly Messiah such as we find in some Qumran texts alongside the king. Second, the Messiah will successfully fight Israel's great and ultimate battle against the forces of evil and paganism. Third, the Messiah will build the Temple, the house to which Israel's God will at last return and live. Fourth, the Messiah will thus bring Israel's history to its climax, fulfilling the biblical texts regarded in this period as messianic prophecies, and usher in the new world of which prophets and others had spoken. Fifth, the Messiah will act in all this as Israel's representative, like David fighting Goliath on Israel's behalf. Sixth, in another sense the Messiah will act as God's representative or agent to Israel and hence to the world.

— N. T. Wright, *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*, 43.

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IRONY IN THE BIBLICAL
NARRATIVE

EYE-FOR-EYE

A photograph of a stone tablet with the text "NOTHING IS WRITTEN IN STONE" engraved on it. The tablet is rectangular and set within a larger, textured stone frame. The text is arranged in three lines: "NOTHING" on the top line, "IS WRITTEN" on the middle line, and "IN STONE" on the bottom line. The stone has a rough, weathered appearance with visible cracks and a mottled grey-blue color.

NOTHING
IS WRITTEN
IN STONE

YESHUA MOCKED AS "KING OF THE JEWS"

RECORDED IN ALL 4 GOSPELS

- Matthew 27:10-54
 - "Are you the King of the Jews?" Yeshua said, "You say so."
 - Crown of thorns on his head, scarlet robe on his body.
 - Placed a reed in his right hand and knelt before him, proclaiming "Hail, King of the Jews"
 - Sign over his head, "This is Yeshua, King of the Jews."
 - Chief priests say, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now."
 - When the Centurion saw the earthquake and everything, he says, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

YESHUA MOCKED AS "KING OF THE JEWS"

RECORDED IN ALL 4 GOSPELS

- Mark 15:1-39
 - "Are you the King of the Jews?" Yeshua said, "You say so."
 - Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him."
 - Crown of thorns on his head, scarlet robe on his body.
 - They saluted him, "Hail, King of the Jews"
 - Sign over his head, "King of the Jews."
 - Chief priests say, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe."
 - When the Centurion saw the earthquake and everything, he says, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

YESHUA MOCKED AS "KING OF THE JEWS"

RECORDED IN ALL 4 GOSPELS

- Luke 23:1-47
 - "Are you the King of the Jews?" Yeshua said, "You say so."
 - Herod put an elegant robe on his body and mocked Yeshua.
 - Sign over his head, "This the King of the Jews."
 - The leaders say, "He saved others; he cannot save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one." The soldiers say, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"
 - When the Centurian saw what had taken place, he says, "Certainly this man was in the right."

YESHUA MOCKED AS "KING OF THE JEWS"

RECORDED IN ALL 4 GOSPELS

- John 18:33-19:37
 - "Are you the King of the Jews?" Yeshua said, "My Kingdom is not of this *kosmos*." and again, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify of the truth."
 - Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ... "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be king sets himself against the emperor."
 - Crown of thorns on his head, scarlet robe on his body.
 - Soldiers proclaiming "Hail, King of the Jews" and striking him in the face.
 - "Here is your King, should I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."
 - Sign over his head, "Yeshua of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

“

[Yeshua sends two disciples to grab a donkey]

This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

“Tell the daughter of Zion,

**Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”**

— *Matthew 21:4-5*

”

“

As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, **“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”** Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” He answered, **“I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”**

— *Luke 19:37-40*

”

“

These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has entertained them as guests. **They are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king named Yeshua.** The people and the city officials were disturbed when they heard this

— Acts 17:6-8

”

“

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the ἄφεσις of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, **whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities**—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

— *Colossians 1:13-16*

”

“

God put this power to work in Messiah when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

—Ephesians 1:20-21

”

“

But think of your own case, and inquire concerning the glory of those who are like yourself, because it is for you that **paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared**, plenty is provided, a city is built, **rest is appointed**, goodness is established and wisdom perfected beforehand. The root of evil is sealed up from you, illness is banished from you, and **death is hidden**; Hades has fled and corruption has been forgotten; sorrows have passed away, and in the end the treasure of immortality is made manifest.

— *2 Esdras 8:51-54*

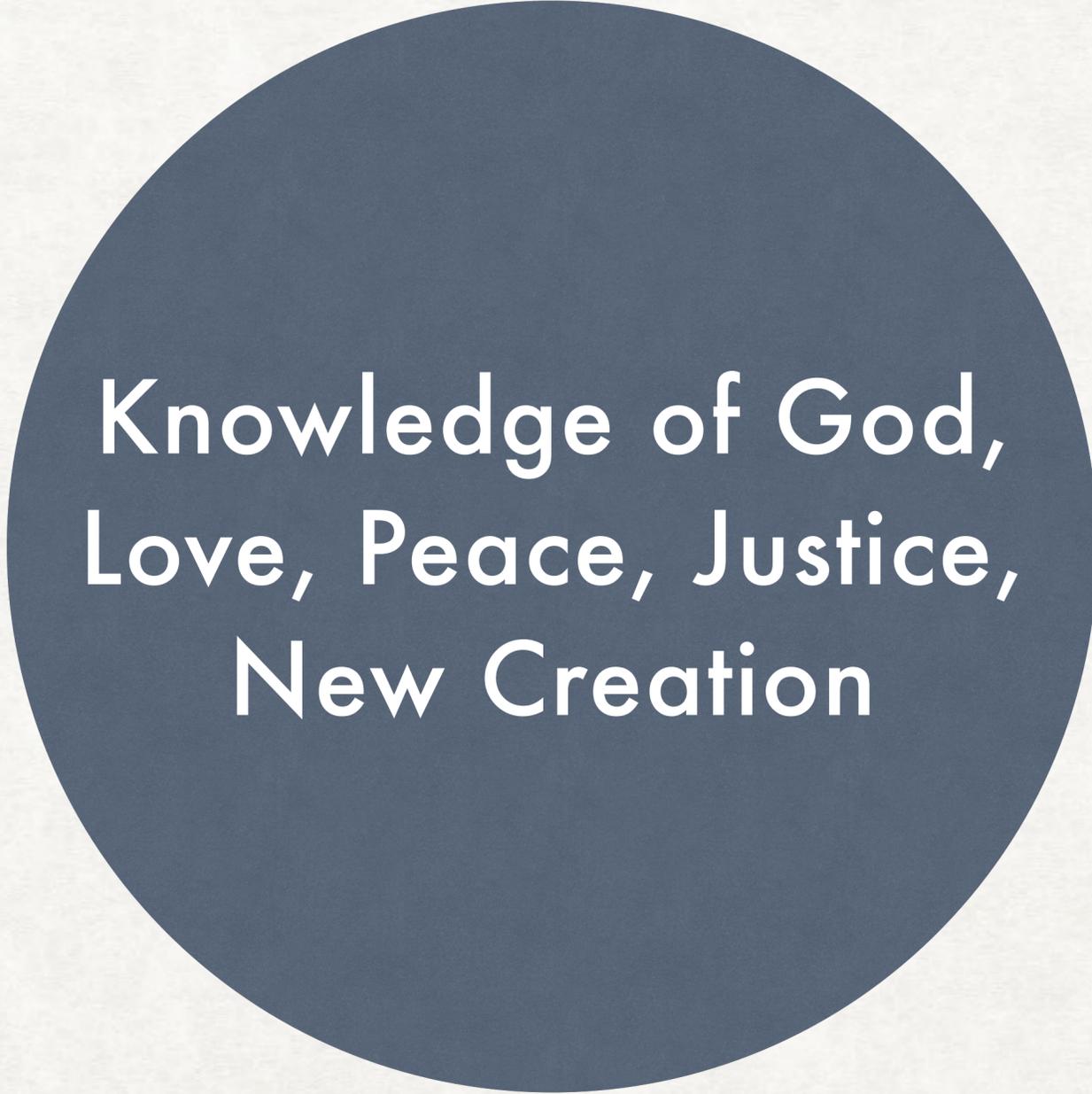
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Expected Two Ages



Sin, Death,
and Evil

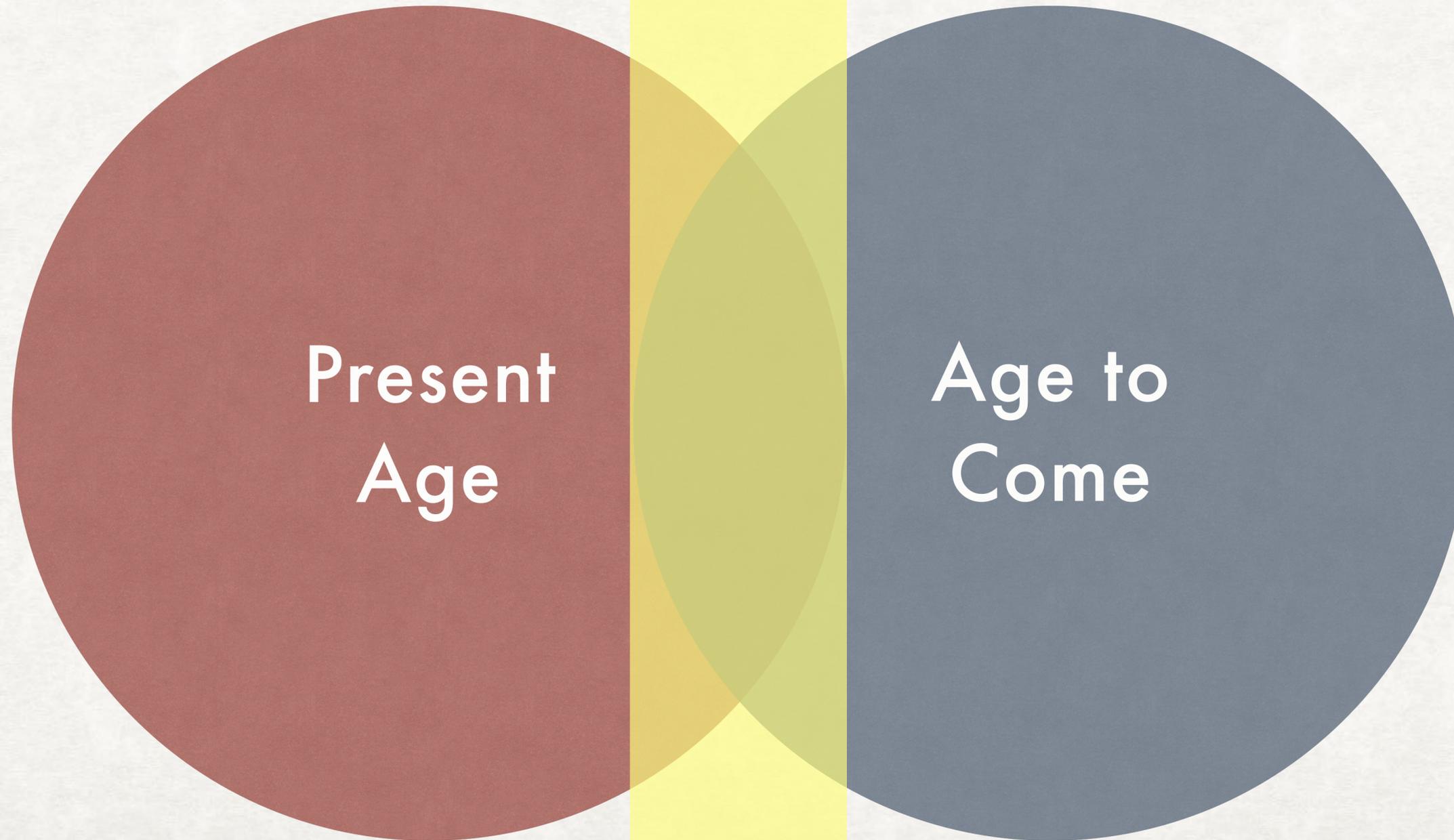
PRESENT AGE



Knowledge of God,
Love, Peace, Justice,
New Creation

AGE TO COME

**THE KINGDOM OF GOD
BREAKING INTO THIS *KOSMOS***



Present
Age

Age to
Come

“

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah, **who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

— *Galatians 1:3-5*

”

“

The God of peace **will shortly crush Satan** under your feet. The grace of our Lord Yeshua Messiah be with you

— *Romans 16:20*

”

“

We do see Yeshua, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, **now crowned with glory and honor** because of the suffering of death

— *Hebrews 2:9*

[We are] looking to Yeshua the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, **who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.**

— *Hebrews 12:2*

”

“

Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! **Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?**

— *Luke 24:26*

”

“

And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

— *Mark 9:1*

”

“

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, **“Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”** But Yeshua answered, **“You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?”** They said to him, **“We are able.”** He said to them, **“You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”**

— *Matthew 20:20-23*

”

THE KING'S KINGDOM

The Kingdom of God

“

After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God...they asked him, **“Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?”**

— *Acts 1:3, 6*

And [Paul] lived there two years...**proclaiming the kingdom of God** and teaching about the Lord Yeshua Messiah with all boldness and without hindrance.

— *Acts 28:30-31*

”

A POWER-SHARING GOD

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN KINGSHIP

- Adam's role as king and participating in completing creation
- David as King of Israel and prince to YHWH
- Israel being the "son of God"
- Yeshua as God's agent
- Revelation 5:10
 - "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth."

“

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

— *Matthew 5:3*

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

— *Matthew 5:10*

”

A NEW WAY OF BEING HUMAN

The Way according to Yeshua

“

From the days of John the Baptist until **now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.** For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. Let anyone with ears listen!

— Matthew 11:12-15

”

“

[The mother of the sons of Zebedee asks her sons be granted position]

Yeshua called them to him and said, **“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.**

— Matthew 20:25-28

”

“

It was a way of love of enemies instead of their destruction, a way of unconditional forgiveness instead of retaliation, a way of readiness to suffer instead of using force, a way of blessing for peacemakers instead of hymns of hate and revenge.

— Hans Kung (from Goheen's *The Story of the Bible*)

”

Violence and separation was the way that many in the first-century imagined the coming of the kingdom of God.

“

The New Testament writers report, in various ways, the remarkable sign of evil doing its worst and being exhausted. When Jesus suffered, he did not curse, and when he was reviled, he did not revile in return (1 Peter 2:23). ‘Father, forgive them’ (Luke 23:34): that constitutes a radical innovation in the long and noble tradition of Jewish martyr-stories, where (as, for instance, in 2 Maccabees 7) the heroes, while being tortured to death, call down God’s vengeance on their persecutors and warn them of coming judgment.

— N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 55

”

“

Then Yeshua said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. **Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?** But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?”

— Matt. 26:52-54

”

“

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Yeshua, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”

Yeshua answered, “**My kingdom is not from this *kosmos*.** If my kingdom were from this *kosmos*, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”

— John 18:33, 36

”

In Gk. philosophy *kosmos* is the basic term for the world-order, the world-system, the sum total of things preserved by this ordering, the world in the spatial sense, the cosmos, the universe, the earth, and also (in Koine Gk.) the inhabitants of the earth, humanity.

“

For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. **For to this you have been called, because Messiah also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps... When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.**

— 1 Peter 2:19-21, 23

”

“

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, **If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.** For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

— Mark 8:34-35

”

“

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming,
“Now have come the salvation and the power and
the kingdom of our God and the authority of his
Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been
thrown down, who accuses them day and night
before our God.

**But they have conquered him by the blood of the
Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for
they did not cling to life even in the face of
death.**

— Revelation 12:10-11

”

“

The idea of cross over conquest baffles us, it is foolishness to us. How can we wrap our minds around the idea that evil can be overcome with love? We live in a world that shoots Tomahawks at problems. This may sound dangerously liberal, but it is not, because liberalism says that we must accommodate pagan culture, which is equally problematic. Our battle is with principalities and powers...that is to say, cultures and ideologies. Killing the leadership of ISIS will not change anything nor would killing Assad do anything. It's not a problem of a few bad eggs, it's a culture of bad eggs. A culture that advances its will through violence.

— Ryan White, driving home from work a not so long ago...

”

THE CROSS IN HISTORY

Perversion and Recovery

“

Moreover, we do not reverence the cross, nor do we worship it. But you, who hold your wooden gods (*ligneos deos*) to be holy, also worship wooden crosses, as parts of your divine images. For what are the military emblems, the banners and standards in your camps, if not gilded and decorated crosses? Not only is the form of your signs of victory like the structure of the cross; it even recalls a man fastened to it

— The Christian Octavius, quoted in *Crucifixion* by Martin Hengal

”

“

Christian emperors such as Valentinian and his brother Valens were adopting the chi-rho as a **symbol of military power and triumph**—as depicted in coins showing emperors dragging a captive in their right hand (representing the subjugation of the nations) and holding a chi-rho standard in their left hand (see fig. 1.3). **The symbol of the simple cross was adapted to play a significant role in the accumulation of political power.**

— *The Cross Before Constantine* by Bruce Longnecker

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The earliest Christian message of the crucified messiah demonstrated the ‘solidarity’ of the love of God with the unspeakable suffering of those who were tortured and put to death by human cruelty, as this can be seen from the ancient sources.

— Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 88

Then YHWH said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. **Indeed, I know their sufferings**, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians.”

— Exodus 3:7-8

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THE CROSS TODAY

Sin Defeated, a "Here-But-Not-Yet" Reality

Shabbat

Shalom!



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