

# THE CRUCIFIXION



Session 5:  
The Apostle Paul and the  
Victory of the Cross

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## OPENING DISCUSSION

- For today's session, many of you read through the entire Epistle to the Romans
- What stood out to you? What did you learn? How would you characterize Paul's "gospel?"



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## GETTING TO KNOW THE APOSTLE PAUL

- A Pharisee (Philippians 3)
- A witness to the risen Christ (Acts 9)
- Apostle to the Gentiles
- Church planter and overseer
- Missionary



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# THE WORLD OF THE FIRST CENTURY ROMAN EMPIRE

- Politics, religion, and culture all intermingled
- Everything in Paul's world had a religious bent
- Christianity did not look like a religion, however, because it refused to worship the gods of Rome and declared a crucified Lord



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# THE CENTRAL SYMBOLS OF PAUL'S JEWISH WORLD

- All the important symbols of Judaism are taken for granted (Temple, Law, circumcision, etc.)
- But what happens when those symbols are gone?
- For Paul, the central symbol was the church as a new human race. Everything in Paul's letters is about this.
- A new race made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus, grounded in the story of Israel.



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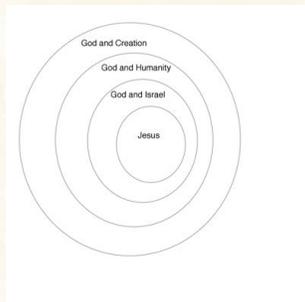
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# THE CENTRAL NARRATIVE: A THREE-LAYERED STORY

- The first layer: God and God's Creation
- The second layer: God and Humanity
- The third layer: God and Israel
- Within that third layer is the inner story about Jesus
- In Jesus, the stories of God and Israel, God and Humanity, and God and Creation are fused together



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# PAUL'S LETTERS

- Paul wrote to his churches to address particular issues, but deals with those issues through this framework.
- He desired that they would have these narratives so deeply embedded in their hearts that they would know and live them naturally.
- For Paul, what we call "Christian theology" is that which enables the church to be the people of God.



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# PAUL'S THEOLOGY

- Monotheism
- Election
- Eschatology



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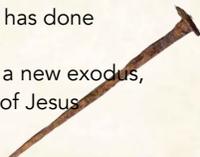
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# MONOTHEISM

- Not a theory but a commitment
- A declaration of allegiance (suzerain/vassal)
- Paul took the central confession of Jewish monotheism and discovered Jesus at the heart of it
- Paul believes that in Jesus, God has come back to his people and uses the Jesus story to explain what God has done
- Now it is the Spirit of God leading people on a new exodus, made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus



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# ELECTION

- God chose Israel to be the people through whom God would bless the whole world
- It is in Israel's representative, the Messiah, that the renewed people of God find their identity
- God has been faithful to the covenant
- "Justification" must be understood through this lens



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# ESCHATOLOGY

- Paul believes we live between two worlds—the old "age" and the "age to come" — the already and the not yet
- Romans 8; I Corinthians 15
- Resurrection of Jesus as "first fruits" of renewal to come



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# THE GOAL: RECONCILIATION

- Reconciliation between God and Creation
- Reconciliation between God and Humans
- One world in which all things are reconciled through Christ (Colossians 1:15-23)



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## EXAMPLES OF PAUL'S "GOSPEL"

- Galatians 1:3-5
- Ephesians 1:3-14
- Philippians 2:5-11
- Colossians 1:15-23



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## ROMANS

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## "ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME"

- Romans - not a systematic theology, but most complete expression of Paul's Gospel
- But one must read ALL of Romans in its context in order to understand the thrust of Paul's argument
- Shortcuts and proof-texts will not do!



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## THE "ROMANS" ROAD - A POOR SHORTCUT

- Romans 3:23 - All have sinned
- Romans 6:23 - Wages of sin is death
- Romans 5:8 - While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us
- Romans 10:9 - If you confess with your mouth...you will be saved
- Romans 5:1 - Justification by faith



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## THE "WORKS CONTRACT"

- All humans sinned, causing God to be angry and to want to kill them, to burn them forever in "hell."
- Jesus somehow got in the way and took the punishment instead (it helped that he was innocent and that he was God's Son, too).
- We are now in the clear after all, heading for heaven (provided that we believe it).



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## THE FULL GOSPEL IN ROMANS

- Romans 1-4
- Romans 5-8
- Romans 9-11
- Romans 12-16



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# ROMANS 1:1-6

- The “gospel of God” (v. 1)
- Promised beforehand in the Scriptures (v. 2)
- Son of David, according to the flesh (v. 3)
- Son of God according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead (v. 4)
- to bring about the “obedience of faith” (v. 5)
- called to belong to Jesus Christ (v. 6)



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# ROMANS 1:16-17

- The gospel is the “power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Jew and Greek) (v. 16)
- “Righteousness of God revealed through faith for faith” (righteousness = covenant faithfulness). It is the faithfulness of God revealed in Christ that enables us to live by faith (not merely believe in faith)
- The gospel changes our status (covenant people) who live by faith (faithfulness)



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# THE REAL PROBLEM: ROMANS 1:18-32

- Idolatry (v. 18-23)
- Leading to sin - God “gave them up” (v. 24-27)
- Sin is not just “doing things God has forbidden;” it is the failure to be fully functioning, God-reflecting human beings
- 3:23 - All have sinned and fallen short of *the glory of God* (ref. Ps. 8)



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## THE CONTRAST: TRUE WORSHIP AND FAITHFULNESS

- 3:21 - "righteousness of God" attested through the Law and the Prophets
- God kept the covenant (Gen. 15) and now we have redemption through the blood of Christ (3:24-26)
- "justified" - set right, made part of God's covenant people (Jews and Gentiles - 3:27-31)
- "through faith" - through true worship and faithfulness to the new covenant in Christ



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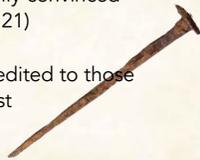
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## ABRAHAM: COVENANT FAITHFULNESS

- Romans 4
- Abraham called prior to the Law - his faith is in God and he "went" according to God's command
- Abraham takes on the covenant mission God gave him - a reboot of the Adam project
- Abraham "gave glory to God" (v. 20) and was "fully convinced that God was able to do what God promised" (v. 21)
- Faith was "credited to him" as righteousness - credited to those who have a similar faith in the faithfulness of Christ



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"Paul is not saying, 'God will justify sinners by faith so they can go to heaven, and Abraham is an advanced example of this.' He is saying, 'God covenanted with Abraham to give him a worldwide family of forgiven sinners turned faithful worshippers, and the death of Jesus is the means by which this happens.'"

-NT Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*, p. 314



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# THE CONTEXT: COVENANT!

- Covenant is the context of 2:17 to 4:25
- God's faithfulness to the covenant with Abraham/Israel and through Israel for the world is the means through which God will deal with Sin—a covenant that climaxes in the faithful death and resurrection of Israel's Messiah
- The true worship at the heart of this covenant replaces the idolatry of 1:18-23 and undoes the sin of 1:24-32



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# RESULTS OF THE COVENANT FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN CHRIST

- Peace with God (5:1)
- Access to his grace and "sharing in the glory of God" (v. 2)  
- "glory" = God's divine glory dwelling in his temple - new creation!
- Christ died for us "while we were yet sinners"
- saved from God's "wrath" on Sin and its slavery
- Reconciliation with God through Christ's death, saved by his life



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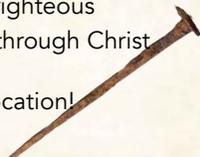
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# JESUS, THE NEW ADAM

- 5:12-21
- Sin and Death entered into the world through Adam's idolatry and sin
- "Free gift" of grace in Christ undoes dominion of Sin
- v. 17 - those who receive this grace and righteous standing "will exercise dominion in life" through Christ
- In other words, be restored to original vocation!



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## BAPTISM: DEATH AND RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST

- 6:1-4 - you "died to sin" - set free from its slavery
- Baptism - an Exodus image
- "so that we too might walk in newness of life" (v. 4)
- Old self crucified with him "that the body of sin may be destroyed and we might no longer be enslaved to Sin"
- We are "dead to Sin and alive to God" (v. 11)



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## RELEASE FROM SLAVERY

- 6:12-14 - Do not let Sin exercise dominion any more. You have been set free, brought from death to life. Sin no longer has dominion over you!
- 6:15-18 - You became slaves of righteousness
- 6:20-23 - free from Sin, slaves of God, brings sanctification (holiness, set apart to become the people God meant you to be) leading to eternal life



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## ROMANS 7

- v. 1-6 - Free from the law, "in order that we might bear fruit for God"
- v. 7-13 - The law identified sin (good), but led to a different version of slavery (bad)
- v. 14-25 - the condition under sin and law - slavery that requires rescue and redemption



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# ROMANS 8: LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

- “The law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of Sin and Death” (v. 2)
- “flesh” = the powerless human will, enslaved
- v. 9 - “You are not of the flesh, you are in the Spirit since the Spirit of God dwells in you”
- The Spirit enables us to live authentic human life and overcomes power of Death
- Living by the Spirit “puts to death” the deeds of the body
- v. 15 - not a spirit of slavery, but a spirit of adoption



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# ROMANS 8: ESCHATOLOGY

- v. 18 - the “glory” to be revealed
- v. 19-20 - creation waits for the revelation of the real children of God
- v. 21 - then creation will be set free from bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God
- v. 23 - “first fruits of the Spirit” - redemption of our bodies
- v. 26 - Spirit helps us in our weakness
- v. 28 - All things work together for good for those who love God and are “called according to his purpose” - to be “conformed to the image of his Son” - new family - vocational renewal!



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# ROMANS 9-11

- The Election of Israel for a purpose
- Paul wants his people to embrace this vocation, which finds its fulfillment in Christ
- Not supercessionist, but hoping that the witness of God’s work among the Gentiles brings all to embrace the new covenant



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## ROMANS 12 - THE RESTORATION OF TRUE WORSHIP

- Romans 12:1-2 - present your bodies as a living sacrifice, this is true worship!
- v. 3-8 - Members of one body
- v. 9-21 - Marks of the true Christian who embraces their vocation as slaves of Christ



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## ROMANS 13-16

- Further instructions and greetings
- Final word - 16:25-27 "to bring about the obedience of faith"



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## WHAT IS PAUL'S GOSPEL?

- It is the good news of Jesus Christ, Israel's true Messiah and divine Son of God, who has come to set both Jews and Gentiles free from slavery to Sin and Death
- We are free when we place our trust and faithfulness in the faithfulness of Christ; we become part of God's covenant people
- Freedom enables us to live the vocation God created for us from the beginning - a royal priesthood
- Grows out of Israel's monotheism, election, and eschatology
- Salvation = all of Creation healed, restoration of true worship, resurrection, new creation



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QUESTIONS?

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