

# THE CRUCIFIXION



Session 6:  
Proclaiming Christ Crucified:  
Living the Way of the Cross

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## OPENING DISCUSSION

- We have reached the conclusion of our course. What lingering questions remain for you?
- How would you now answer the question, "Why did Jesus die on the cross?"



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## A REVIEW

- What is the "gospel?"
- Jesus' death in historical and theological context
- Crucifixion, Sin, and Evil - The Crux of the Problem
- "In accordance with the Scriptures" - The OT
- Paul and the Victory of the Cross



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# A REVIEW OF "POPULAR" GOSPELS

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## THE PROGRESSIVE PARADIGM

- The goal: "Human flourishing"
- The problem: Humans are not self-actualized and are in need of uplift. Social injustice impedes human progress
- The solution: Using Jesus (and many other moral teachers) as a moral example, humanity will get better and better



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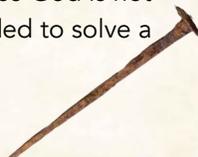
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## THE POPULAR PARADIGM

- The goal: To be happy and to feel good about oneself
- The problem: No problem, really. We're good!
- The solution: Doesn't require God, since God is not really involved in one's life unless needed to solve a personal problem



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# THE EVANGELICAL PARADIGM

- The goal: "Heaven" and eternal life in the future
- The problem: "Sin" (bad behavior deserving punishment)
- The solution: An angry God punishes our "sin" by taking it out on Jesus as a sacrificial human in our place



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# THE "WORKS CONTRACT"

- God told humans to keep a moral code; their continued life in the Garden of Eden depended on their keeping that code perfectly
- Failure would incur the punishment of death
- Humans failed to keep the moral code (made even more stringent in the Law)
- Humans were thus headed to hell rather than heaven



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# THE "WORKS CONTRACT"

- Finally, however, Jesus obeyed this moral code perfectly and, in his death, paid the penalty on behalf of the whole human race
- The overarching arrangement ("works contract") between God and humans remained the same, but Jesus did what was required
- Those who believe in Jesus benefit from his achievement and go to heaven; those who don't, don't.



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## DEFINING THE PROBLEM

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### THE PROBLEM: A FAILURE OF TRUE WORSHIP

- Genesis 2: Adam and Eve - the archetypal representatives of humanity
- Human beings, worshipping their Creator, were the key to the proper flourishing of the world
- Genesis 3 - A failure of worship - "You will be like God..." (v. 4)
- The humans gave their worship to that which is not God (Romans 1:18-25) - a failure of vocation



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### A REDEFINITION OF "SIN"

- *hamartia* - "missing the mark" - What is the mark? The image of God, a full human life of worship and stewardship
- Idolatry hands power and authority (and our worship) to non-divine forces that then enslave us (often personified as "The Satan")
- "Sins" are the result of our enslavement to these "elemental forces"
- "Death" is the outworking of sin - the ultimate enslaving power (Romans 5:12)



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## WHY CRUCIFIXION? (FLEMING RUTLEDGE)

- “Jesus situation under the harsh judgment of Rome was analogous to our situation under Sin. He was condemned; he was rendered helpless and powerless; he was stripped of his humanity; he was reduced to the status of a beast, declared unfit to live and deserving of a death proper to slaves—and what, according to Paul, were we if not slaves?”
- Jesus was crucified [because] no other mode of execution would have been commensurate with the extremity of humanity’s condition under Sin.



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## HOW DOES THIS HISTORICAL EVENT BECOME THE THEOLOGICAL EVENT?

- Christ died “according to the Scriptures”
- The Messiah, the representative of Israel, which was the representative of humanity, enters into the depth of the human condition
- He becomes as a slave and dies a slave’s death (Philippians 2)
- Thus the Son of God entered into solidarity with the lowest and least of all his creation, the nameless and forgotten “the offscouring of all things” (1 Cor. 4:13)



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## IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES

- The story of the Bible is the story of how the Creator God rescues his people from slavery to Sin and Death so that they might be renewed in his image and reengage their vocation as a royal priesthood
- The story of the Bible is the story of God’s covenant to bring this rescue plan to reality through Israel and through Israel’s ultimate representative and King



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## IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES

- When we give our worship and allegiance to the crucified King, we are released from slavery to Sin and Death—the powers he defeated on the cross and in the resurrection
- We begin to become the people we were created to be—both now and in the future



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## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

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## EASTER AS VINDICATION

- The empty tomb vindicates Jesus' mission as God's true Messiah, Savior, and Lord
- It signifies the beginning of the new creation
- It is the defeat of the enslaving powers of Sin and Death
- It is the prototype of human destiny for those who follow Christ and embrace their true vocation



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# HOW SHALL WE THEN LIVE?

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## AS WE WORSHIP, SO WE BELIEVE, AND SO WE LIVE

- **Progressive:** fighting “injustice” and promoting human flourishing and self-actualization
- **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism:** Try to be a “better person” and enjoy life
- **“Works Contract:”** Look forward to heaven (and do some good along the way)
- **Bible:** A life discipleship and vocation in the way of Christ



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“Jesus never said, ‘God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.’ He said, ‘Take up your cross and follow me.’”

– N.T. Wright



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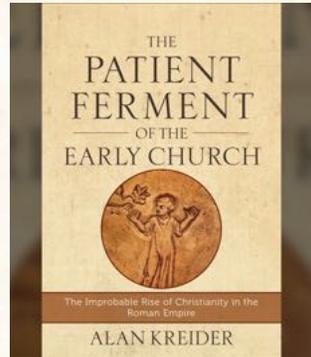
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# CASE STUDY: THE EARLY CHURCH

- Thesis question: Why did the number of Christians grow so impressively in the first three centuries and impact such a large geographical area?
- How did Christianity grow despite being completely out of step with a Roman culture that was, by and large, hostile to the Christian faith?



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## THE SURPRISING RESULTS

- It was **not** the result of entertaining preaching. Preaching in public would likely lead to arrest, torture, and death.
- It was **not** the result of great worship. The early church did not use worship to attract new people. Indeed, worship was closed to outsiders. Believers were not even to talk about what went on in their worship to outsiders. Worship services were to glorify God and edify the faithful, not to evangelize outsiders.
- It was **not** the result of an evangelism strategy (or programs for children, youth, and families)



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## THE KEY TO CHRISTIAN EXPANSION

- "A steady fermenting process."
- Coaching proselytes in Christian faith and character
- Three year catechesis, based on Sermon on the Mount
- Coaching done by sponsors who modeled Christian maturity and character
- Only after a person's life reflected the way of Christ were they allowed to join the church.
- "Christian communities worked to transform the habits of those who were candidates for membership through teaching and relationship (apprenticeship) and worship."



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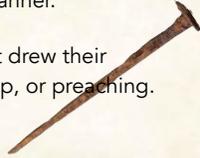
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## KREIDER:

- “The churches grew in many places, taking varied forms. They proliferated because the faith that these hunters and fishers embodied was attractive to people who were dissatisfied with their old cultural and religious habits, who felt pushed to explore new possibilities, and who then encountered Christians who embodied a new manner of life that pulled them toward what the Christians called ‘rebirth’ into a new life. Surprisingly, this happened in a patient manner.”
- In other words, it was Christ-like character that drew their neighbors toward faith—not programs, worship, or preaching.



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## IN OTHER WORDS...

- The early church did not focus on *conversion*, but on *vocation*—growing into the image of Christ
- The early church did not evangelize with a set of propositions, but invited people to enter the story of Jesus they were telling and living out.
- Living a life of cross-bearing discipleship attracted their pagan neighbors
- They did not believe one could be a Christian on one’s own, but that it required a community



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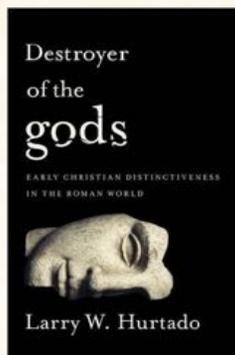
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## A DISTINCTIVE PEOPLE

- “Classic liberal forms of modern Christianity have often been concerned to align themselves with the dominant culture, affirming its values, even shifting in beliefs and practices markedly to do so. But the danger in this can be that unless there are also distinctive features (and demands) of being an adherent of a group, people cannot see the point of becoming one, or the worth of remaining one.”



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# THE CROSS-BEARING LIFE

- A life of suffering love in the model of Jesus
- Entering into the world's pain and slavery and proclaiming release to the captives
- Resisting the powers of Evil, Sin, and Death
- Living the life of the Spirit



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# EVANGELISM

- Not a focus on conversion, but on discipleship
- Not "accepting Jesus" but following him
- Not a focus on numbers, but on character and vocation
- Living the way of Christ in front of others in your front line places every day
- Being prepared to give an account of the hope that is in you and tell the story of your freedom



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# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH

- The biblical paradigm of Christ's death and resurrection is embedded in the church as God's new covenant community
- It is through the church that we are formed in the character of Christ and are equipped to live out our vocation in the image of God in the world
- It is in the church where we constantly remember our freedom from Sin and Death via baptism and the Eucharist, the New Passover



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# THE WESLEYAN WAY

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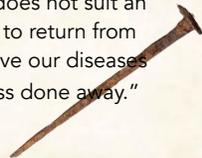
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## “THE ONE THING NEEDFUL” - JOHN WESLEY

- “To recover our first estate, from which we are thus fallen, is the one thing now needful—to re-exchange the image of Satan for the image of God, bondage for freedom, sickness for health. Our one great business is to raze out of our souls the likeness of our destroyer, and to be born again, to be formed after the likeness of our Creator. It is our one concern to shake off this servile yolk and to regain our native freedom; to throw off every chain, every passion and desire that does not suit an angelic nature. The one work we have to do is to return from the gates of death to perfect soundness; to have our diseases cured, our wounds healed, and our uncleanness done away.”



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## RELEASE FROM SLAVERY: A MOVEMENT OF GRACE

- Prevenient Grace - God invites us
- Justifying Grace - God makes us right
- Sanctifying Grace - God forms us in God’s image



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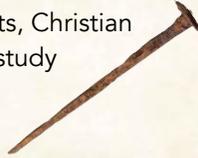
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# THE MEANS OF GRACE

- Works of Piety
  - Personal: reading and meditating on the Scriptures, prayer, fasting, attending worship, healthy living, sharing faith with others
  - Communal: sharing in the sacraments, Christian conferencing (accountability), Bible study



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# THE MEANS OF GRACE

- Works of Mercy
  - Personal: doing good works, visiting the sick, visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry, giving generously to the needs of others
  - Communal: seeking justice, ending oppression, addressing the needs of the poor



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## HOW DO WE LIVE OUR FREEDOM?

- Being part of a discipling relationship, reminding one another of our freedom
- Participate in ministries and work that reflect our vocation in the image of God
- Participating regularly in worship and sacrament, recalibrating us to vocation and freedom
- Engaging in disciplines that foster growth in grace



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## THE "METHOD" IN METHODISM

- Society meeting
- Class meeting
- Band meeting
- All designed to help members grow in their vocation as disciples of Jesus; as citizens of the new creation!



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But the most glorious of all will be the change which then will take place on the poor, sinful, miserable children of men. These had fallen in many respects, as from a greater height, so into a lower depth, than any other part of the creation. But they shall "hear a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men: And he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be their God." (Rev. 21:3, 4)



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Hence will arise an unmixed state of holiness and happiness far superior to that which Adam enjoyed in Paradise. In how beautiful a manner is this described by the Apostle: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: For the former things are done away!"



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As there will be no more death, and no more pain or sickness preparatory thereto; as there will be no more grieving for, or parting with, friends; so there will be no more sorrow or crying. Nay, but there will be a greater deliverance than all this; for there will be no more sin. And, to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, and of all the creatures in him!

—John Wesley, "The New Creation"



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QUESTIONS?

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