

Do you know the earliest depiction of Jesus we have? It's not what you'd guess. This is the famous "Alexamenos" graffito. Likely early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century. Here is the reproduction. It was sketched onto a wall of a building on Rome's Palatine Hill. People have been vandalizing bathroom stalls for centuries, turns out. It's a crude picture of a man being crucified, with the head of a donkey and a guy paying homage. The words say "Alexamenos worships his God." Here we have a kid mocking another kid for being a Christian. We also learn that right off the bat, Jesus was worshipped, worshipped as God, was crucified, had worshippers.

But the thought of a crucified God was considered foolish. We have been in a series on the cross and we have seen that crucifixion was the lowest form of capital punishment. You wouldn't mention in polite society. The criminals would hang there naked, barely alive, covered in blood, swarmed by gnats, nibbled at by rats, pecked at by the crows. Shameful. And *yet*, this is the means God chose to use to defeat evil. The cross achieves victory. *Christus Victor*.

This is what the Bible centers on. Scripture is a story. Several years ago, Pastor Dane Ortlund asked several theologians to summarize of the Bible in one sentence.<sup>1</sup> A few of my favorites: Zach Eswine: Apprenticing with Jesus to become human again. David Helm: Jesus is the promised Savior-King. Kent Hughes: God is redeeming his creation by bringing it under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Michale Williams: God made it, we broke it, Jesus fixes it! Dane Ortlund: Despite ongoing rebellion on our part, the holy God of the universe refuses to leave us to wallow in our sin, eventually and climactically becoming one of us, in the moral mud, to restore us to glory, if we will receive his love in trusting contrition. But my favorite comes from Pastor Doug Wilson: "Scripture tells us the story of how a Garden is transformed into a Garden City, but only after a dragon had turned that Garden into a howling wilderness, a haunt of owls and jackals, which lasted until an appointed warrior came to slay the dragon, giving up his life in the process, but with his blood effecting the transformation of the wilderness into the Garden City." Joe Rigney shortens it to: kill the dragon, get the girl. 6 words. The dragon being Satan, the girl being the bride of Christ, the church.

Open up to Gen 3. First some, context. Not much there. Gen 1 all good, Gen 2 marriage, Gen 3 autonomy and the redefinition of right and wrong. / Banished Gen 3:23-24. Hab 1:13: "You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong." Fallen world. Surrounded by sins and sorrows. Thorns infest the ground. We are now under the power of Sin. It is not just bad things people do, it is a force. Consider this dialogue between Calvin and Hobbes: Calvin: I'm getting nervous about Christmas. Hobbes: You're worried you haven't been good? Calvin: That's just the question. It's all relative. What's Santa's definition? How good do you have to be to qualify as good? I haven't killed anybody. That's good, right? I haven't committed any felonies. I didn't start any wars . . . . Wouldn't you say that's pretty good? Wouldn't you say I should get lots of presents? Hobbes: But maybe good is more than the absence of bad. Calvin: See, that's what worries me.<sup>2</sup> We are under Sin. We need redemption, we need God to let us back in the Garden, we need a Victor: **3:15** / Two promises: we are at war, victory is certain.

**First, we are at war.** There would be constant hostility between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the Serpent, the godly line and the evil line. And the war begins right off the bat. Cain, the offspring of the serpent kills Abel, offspring of the woman **4:8**. Listen to how John describes these two in 1 John 3:12: "We should not be like Cain, *who was of the evil one* and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him?"

<sup>1</sup> <https://dogmadoxa.blogspot.com/2011/01/whats-message-of-bible-in-one-sentence.html>

<sup>2</sup> *Calvin and Hobbes* by Bill Waterson, December 23, 1990.

Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous." Cain was the offspring of the serpent at enmity with the offspring of the woman.

And there is this line that goes straight through Scripture, the distinction of the enemies of God opposed to the people of God: the sons of Cain and the sons of Seth, Isaac/Ismael, Jacob/Esau, Israel/Egypt. Pharaoh and the Egyptians are the offspring of the serpent and Moses and the Israelites are the offspring of the woman. So the king of Egypt commands the midwives to kill every male offspring born to an Israelite woman (Exod 1:15–16). Kill the offspring of the woman. Then Israel and the Canaanites, then Israel and Assyria, Israel and Babylon, Israel and Rome, the righteous and the wicked, the two ways to live, the wise and the foolish in Prov. Herod, the son of the Serpent vs. the offspring of the Woman. Matt 2:16: "Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men."

Listen to how Jesus describes those who are opposed to him: "You are of your Father the devil (offspring of the serpent) and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (8:44). The offspring of the serpent hates the offspring of the woman. Those who love the darkness are opposed to those who walk in the light. There is the world and there is the church. Ja 4:4: "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." 1 John 2:15: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." There is an antithesis between the church and the world and Jesus says "If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18-19). Perpetual animosity, ongoing hostility. Life is a war.

Rom 1 teaches that all people know God and there is one of two responses to that revelation. There are those who submit to God and those who suppress him. There is no neutrality in this world. Every square inch is claimed by the Lord Jesus Christ and counterclaimed by the father of lies. No one is neutral. The question is not will we have a god but which one? Who or what will have our allegiance? It is not whether but which. Jesus said, "Whoever is not with me is against me" (Matt 12:30). There are two classes of people in the world: those with Jesus and those against him. Seed of the woman/seed of the Serpent. We are in the midst of a spiritual battle.

**Second, victory is certain.** There will come one who will defeat evil. A snake crusher. A dragon slayer. So the question from this point on in the story of Scripture is "where is this offspring of the woman who will crush the head of the snake?" Where is the vicarious victor? The substitutionary Savior? The holy hero we so desperately need?

I think Adam and Eve, when they heard this promise, probably thought Cain **4:2**. Wasn't Cain. Evil isn't defeated but only increases. Then God judges the whole world except one family. Is it Noah? Nope. Like Adam he ends up indulging the fruit of the vine and ends up naked and ashamed. Then God calls a moon-worshiper named Abram, changes his name to Abraham which means father of many nations, an astounding promise. Because of God's promise to a pagan Gentile, the whole world would be transformed. And God promised that

he would bless the whole world through Abraham's offspring. So now we are waiting for an offspring of the woman who is an offspring of Abraham who will bless all the nations. And he would be a king! One who would rule **17:6, 35:11 49:10**. So now we have a fuller picture for what to expect. Just from Genesis, we are waiting for an offspring of the woman, and offspring of Abraham, an offspring of Judah who will bless the nations and to whom all people will obey! A King with universal rule! The Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Further down the line, listen to Balaam's oracle in Num 24:17-19: "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. Edom shall be **dispossessed**; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Israel is doing valiantly. And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!" He shall crush the head of his enemies. Then we have Deut 17 which lays out laws concerning Israel's King – long before there was a King and he is to be holy, set apart and his to know the Law. The King will know God's Word and bring it to bear on life.

Then we have the book of Judges where we see so clearly the need for a righteous King. The refrain is: In those day there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes (17:6, 21:25). Then we have the story of Ruth, where a stud named Boaz redeems a pagan woman and the sole purpose of God in that romance story is to preserve the line of David. The most important line in the book of Ruth is the very last verse that has nothing to do with the redemptive romance story: 4:21-22: "Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David. The end.

**2 Sam 7:12-14a**. So the offspring of the woman who will reverse the curse will be the offspring of Noah and Abraham and Jacob and Judah and David. / Flip over to the Psalms. **Ps 2** is written by King David **72:1, 4, 8-11, 17-19, 89:4, 28-29, 35-37, 110**. The prophets also paint this picture of a coming royal figure in the line of David who will conquer evil. **Ezek 34:11-24** (Dan 7:1-14, 27).

So the faithful of the OT were waiting for an offspring of the woman, an offspring of Abraham, an offspring of David, a Good shepherd, a Son of Man who will come, have dominion over the beasts and defeat the enemy. Matt 1:1: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." This is who Jesus is. He is the King. 2 Tim 2:8: "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel." He's the King. Our prophet, priest, and King. Our prophet who tells the truth, our priest who makes intercession and atonement on our behalf, our King who wins the battle and leads us his people.

Victory is certain. But notice what Gen 3:15 said, the royal King will have his heel bruised. He will crush the snake's head but he will be wounded. This is ultimately about the cross. The Royal Offspring suffered and died. Crucified. His crown was a crown of thorns. He is the King, but he is also the suffering Servant. Think Isa 53: crushed, smitten, stricken, afflicted. Seemingly defeated. Bruised. Darkness rejoiced as though heaven had lost. His heel was bruised but he rose victorious. He crushed the serpent's head through death. Stott writes, "Overcome there, he was himself overcoming. Crushed by the ruthless power of Rome, he was himself crushing the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). The victim was the victor, and the cross is still the throne from which he rules the world . . . the cross secured the conquest of evil."<sup>3</sup>

1 John 3:8b: "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." Col 2:13-15: "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal

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<sup>3</sup> Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 224.

demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” John 12:31: “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.” Luke 10:18: Jesus says he saw Satan fall like lightning. Heb 2:14-15: “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”

Matt 12:28-30: “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. Whoever is not with me is against me.” The Kingdom came in the first coming of Christ. The strong man has been bound. Jesus, the offspring of the woman is taking the serpent’s stuff. Rev 20: Because of the work of Christ, Satan has been bound so that now the gospel can go to the nations. Jesus has been given all authority. **Rev 12:1-12.**

The offspring of the woman has come, and though his heel was bruised, he has crushed the head of the serpent. As we sing, “A day, a day of promise, a hope to end our woe. A day that tells of triumph against our vanquished foe. In flesh His entrance humble, the swaddling clothes His robe. The meek displayed in power, the Prince of Peace now known. Let angels shout the triumph as mortals raise their voice. Behold the Son of heav'n and earth, the King of Kings is born.”

As one author says, “The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus constituted a revolution in the spiritual government of our world.”<sup>4</sup> Christmas is about cosmic reclamation. Jesus is reclaiming what is rightly his. A *coup d'état par excellence*, a revolution like no other. News because of which everything is different. The universe is now under new management.<sup>5</sup> He has the whole world in his hands. The universe is his by double right: creator and redeemer. Lewis: “Enemy-occupied territory - that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. When you go to church you are really listening-in to the secret wireless from our friends: that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going.”<sup>6</sup>

Jesus Christ ascended to the right hand of God. Jesus is the offspring of the woman/Ab/David, the forever King for everyone who defeated the enemy and is reigning and he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor 15:20-28).. Jesus wins. Therefore, dearly beloved, we win.

Rom 16:20: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” Peace and crushing are normally not associated, but it is in God’s economy. God will wipe out all wickedness. He will cleanse his world of all sin. He’ll put the world to rights. It is only through the destruction of evil that true peace can be had. Hostility must be eradicated for peace to exist. So the God of peace will crush Satan, but notice, he will crush him under *our feet*! His victory is ours.

Friends, the reality of the victorious King should make us confident – in three ways. To use advental terms, peace, love, hope. First, confidence in your personal life: peace. Not in self – heaven forbid. Literally. Heaven,

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas Wilson, *Heaven Misplaced* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2008), 59.

<sup>5</sup> Macleod, *Christ Crucified*, 250.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 46.

forbid that we should boast in the self. No, confidence in our great God. The kept promises of God and the felt presence of God should be kryptonite to fear and anxiety and insecurity. Stop gazing at your navel and behold the wondrous mystery. “Come behold the wondrous mystery, In the dawning of the King, He the theme of heaven’s praises, Robed in frail humanity, In our longing, in our darkness, Now the light of life has come, Look to Christ, who condescended, Took on flesh to ransom us.”<sup>7</sup>

Second, confidence in mission, which is the truest form of love to others. We know the end of the story. Jesus wins! He’s the risen and reigning King. The devil has no claim on him. Be emboldened to go be an ambassador. John Jefferson Davis writes, “The most serious obstacle to the success of the church’s mission is not the power of its spiritual opponents, but the church’s own weakness of faith and partial grasp of the invincible resources which are hers in Christ Jesus.”<sup>8</sup>

Third, confidence about the future. In other words, hope. Its gon’ be alright. God will keep his promise. Evil will not prevail. Jesus has paid for the penalty of sin, he is currently freeing us from the power of sin and will one day remove the very presence of sin. On the new heavens and new earth, there will be no pain, no curse, no tears. / Issac Watts 1719: “Joy to the world; the Lord is come; Let Earth receive her King; Let ev'ry heart prepare him room, And heav'n and nature sing. Joy to the Earth, the Savior reigns; Our mortal songs employ, While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains, Repeat the sounding joy. No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make his blessings flow Far as the curse is found. He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the nations prove The glories of his righteousness, And wonders of his love.” / G /

**Benediction:** Now may the realities of a promise-keeping Father, a reigning Son, a defeated enemy, a certain victory, and an ever-present Spirit carry you this Christmas season.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mattpapa.com/songs/come-behold-the-wondrous-mystery>

<sup>8</sup> John Jefferson Davis, *Christ’s Victorious Kingdom* (Laurel, MS: Audubon Press, 2006), 49.