



Summer Bible School

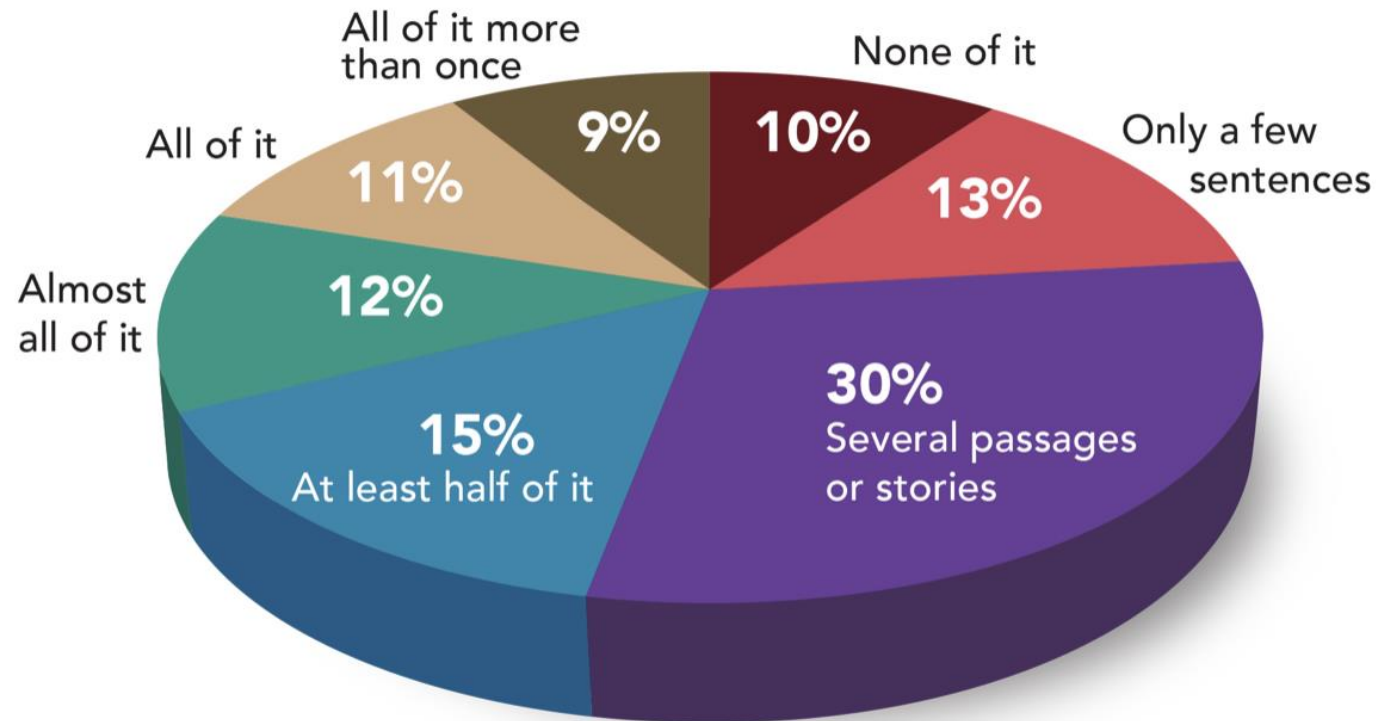
**First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe
Introduction and the Complexity of Scripture**

June 6, 2021

Americans are fond of the Bible, but we don't actually read it

Among Americans:

How much of the Bible have you personally read?



Christians, who make up a majority of U.S. adults (71%), are divided over how to interpret the Bible. While about four-in-ten Christians (39%) say the Bible's text is the word of God and should be taken literally, 36% say it should not be interpreted literally or express another or no opinion. A separate 18% of Christians view the Bible as a book written by men, not God.



So, let's get started . . .

- The Bible is not one book but at least 66 books
- Written over the span of 1100 years, starting around 1,000 BCE
- Even those written earliest were recording events that took place 750 years and more before the actual writing occurred.
- A multitude of writings are included in the book: poems, hymns, law codes, creeds, parables, folk tales about great people, histories, genealogies, diaries, liturgies for use in worship, letters written to church groups for study and instruction, personal letters dispatched to friends.

There's more

- Scripture was written by and about people who lived in a vast variety of cultural situations.
- Some lived in Egypt from about 1700 to 1300 BCE;
- Others lived as outcasts for two centuries in the mountains of Judah;
- Others were inhabitants of the most powerful empire of its contemporary world in the time of King David;
- Others were exiled for some generations into the far-off land of Babylon;
- Still others were residents of great cities of the Hellenistic world, like Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, and Rome itself.

These people were ruled by one great empire after the other

- The Egyptian
- The Syrian
- The Assyrian
- The Babylonian
- The Persian
- The Greek
- The Roman

No other known collection of writings was produced in so many different cultural settings

- Scripture was written in two basic languages, Hebrew and Greek, both of which are used today chiefly by scholars and which are unfamiliar to the rest of us.
- The texts are admittedly not the original ones.
- Our earliest New Testament text dates from the middle of the 2nd Century AD and the texts used for the Old Testament come largely from the 9th Century AD.
- There are endless variations given for the spelling of words and for the form of the various verb-endings, and alternate texts are offered for some passages in the original text of the author.

All the translations confound the confusion

- King James Version—the most literal but based on an out-of-date text and employs a form of the English language more suited to the 17th Century than our own.
- The Revised Standard Version tried to update the KJV and succeeded at some points but failed at others.
- The Good News Bible, the New English Bible, and the translations of J.B. Phillips attempted to catch the Spirit of the Scripture rather than its literal meaning, while translators of the Living Bible chose the theologically most conservative position at every point.
- Evangelicals are apt to use the New International Version (NIV) while the mainline church uses the New Revised Standard Version

Clearly the Bible is difficult to read and to understand, a complex book that staggers even the most serious scholar

- Still want to continue?



Summer Bible School

First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe

Assured Dates and Pioneering Persons

June 13, 2021

A few thoughts from last week:

The trouble with translations

The King James Bible—published in 1611

- James warmed to a new translation because he despised the then popular Geneva Bible. He was bothered more by its sometimes borderline revolutionary marginal notes than by the actual quality of the translation.
- Consider how preposterous it was to have a team of elite scholars writing for a largely illiterate public. We can only stand back in amazement at their achievement. Think how ludicrous the translation mandate was. It called for a product commissioned to reinforce a clear-cut royal political agenda, to be done by elite scholarly committees, reviewed by a self-serving bureaucracy, with ultimate approval reserved to an absolutist monarch. The final product was intended primarily for public and popular consumption. It was to be read orally -- intended more to be heard in public than to be read in private.

Five major components went into the composition of the Scriptures

1. Dates and historical settings
2. Look carefully at the lives of those persons who had the most impact on shaping the Scriptures. We'll look at four such persons: Moses, David, Elijah, and Jesus.
3. Social movements: Patriarchs, Period of the Judges, Prophets, and the followers of Jesus as an organized movement
4. These movements began to provide compositions that were used by later writers as the actual books of Scripture were written.
5. How to make sense of it all through theology, the reasoned and reasonable attempt to respond to the activity of God in human affairs.

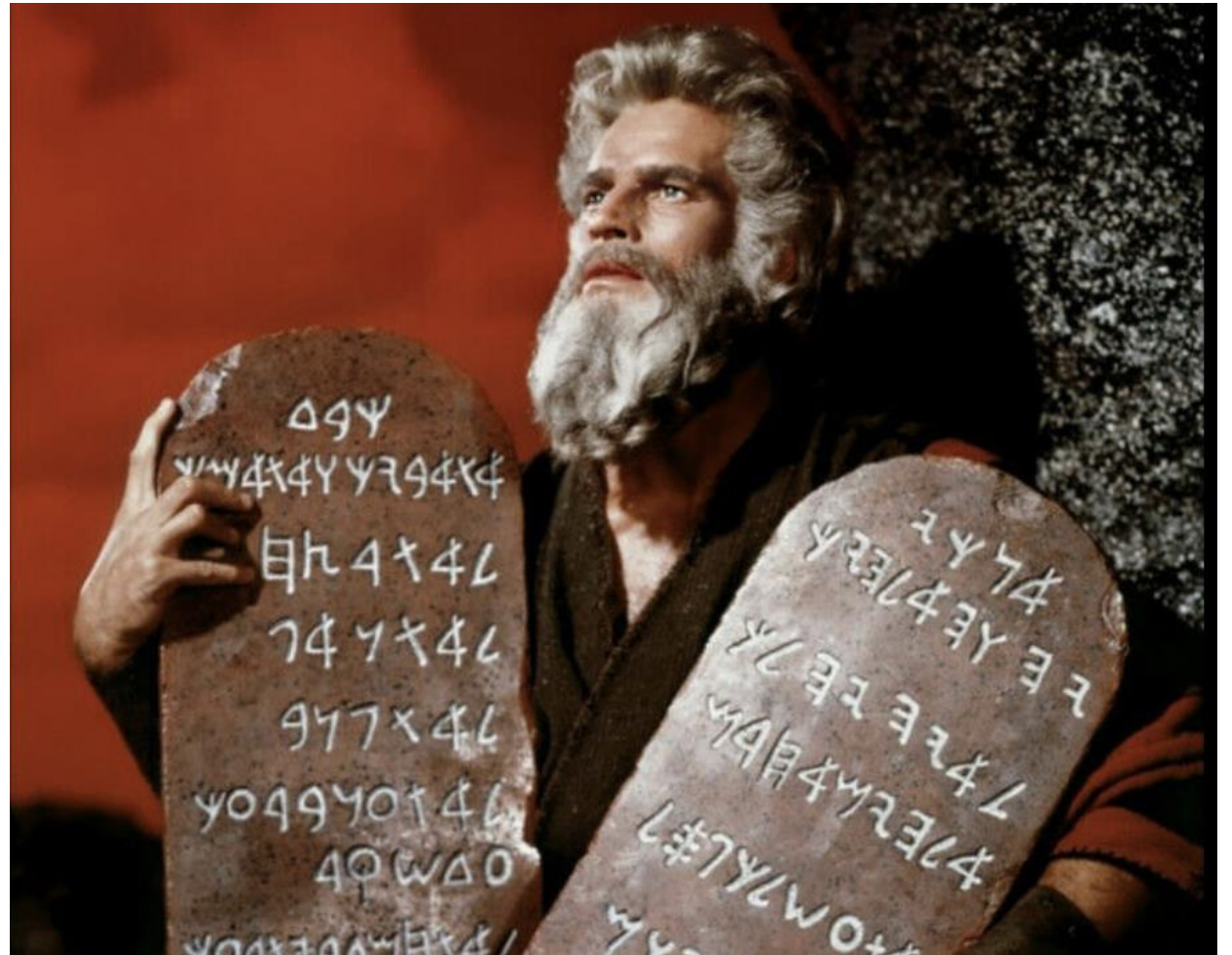
Important Dates

- 1325 BCE The exodus from Egypt under Moses
- 1000 The beginning of David's kingdom
- 925 The division of David's kingdom into a northern kingdom called Israel and the southern kingdom called Judah
- 722 The destruction by Assyria of the northern kingdom
- 586 The destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies and the exile of Judah into Babylon
- 539 The beginning of the return to the land of Judah from the Babylonian exile

Assured Dates

- 333 The Greek conquest of the Persian empire and the beginning of the Hellenization of the world
- 167 The Maccabean revolt
- 63 Rome takes over the Holy Land
- 29 A.D. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- 70 The destruction of Jerusalem by Roman armies under Titus
- 135 The final revolt of Bar Kochba, whose defeat ended Jewish hopes for a return to power in the area that Rome now called Palestine

Moses the Covenant- Maker



- Lived around 1300 BCE, during the time when the people of Israel were enslaved in Egypt. These tribes, who traced their lineage to Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, had come to Egypt during a time of famine some generations earlier.
- Moses was born in the time of Ramses. His mother and father were from the House of Levi. The Israelite population was increasing so rapidly that the Pharaoh had ordered all male Israelite babies to be exterminated.
- His mother placed the infant in a papyrus basket, sealed it tight with clay and tar, and hid him among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. He was rescued from the river by an Egyptian princess, who reared him in the court of Pharaoh himself (Exodus 2:1-10)

Moses and the burning bush

Exodus 3:1-15



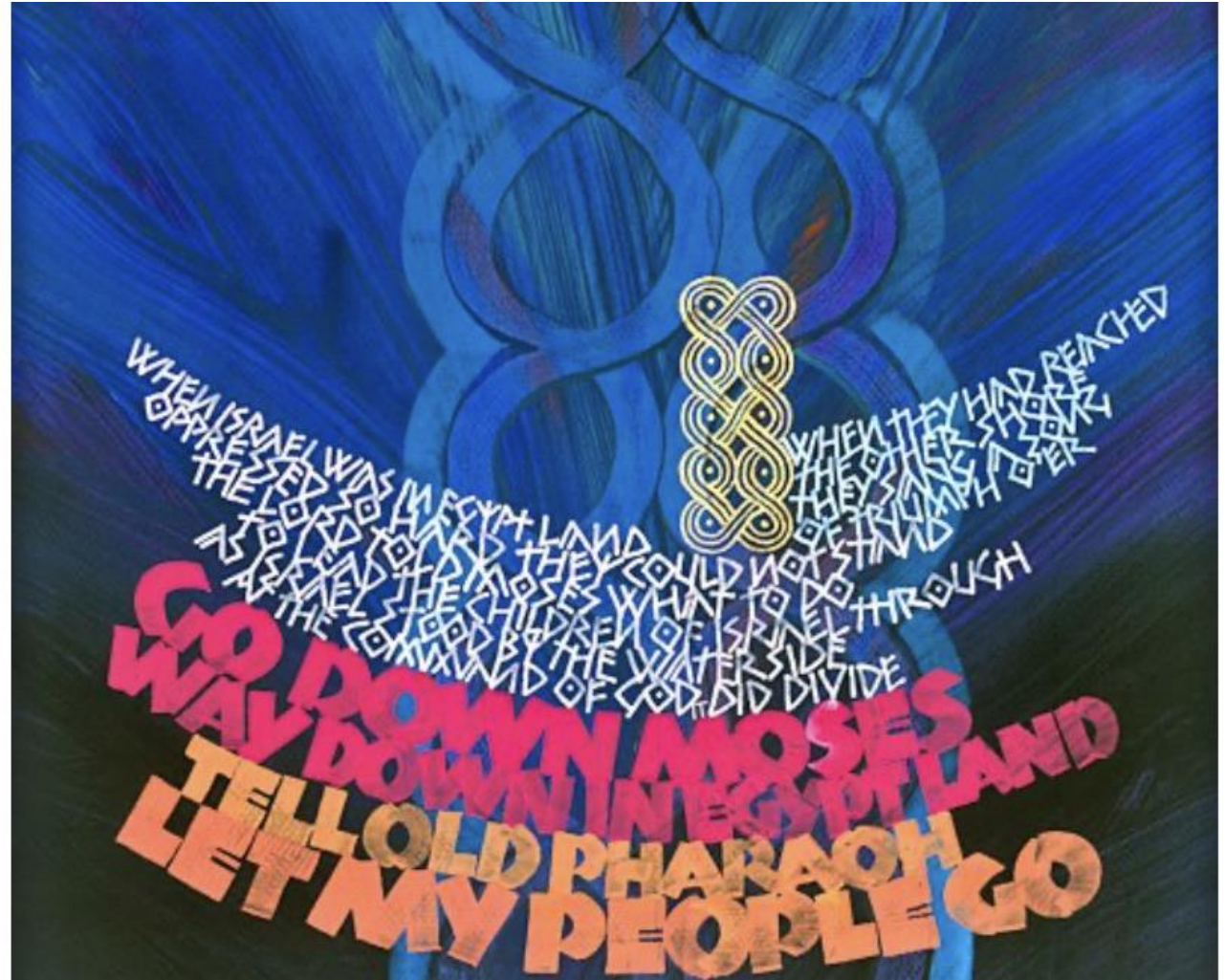
Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ³Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." ⁴When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷Then the Lord 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, ⁸and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

- ¹³But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

Let my people
go!

Exodus 6:1-13



Then the Lord said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh: Indeed, by a mighty hand he will let them go; by a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land.” ²God also spoke to Moses and said to him: “I am the Lord. ³I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name ‘The Lord’ I did not make myself known to them. ⁴I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens. ⁵I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. ⁶Say therefore to the Israelites, ‘I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

⁷I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.’” ⁹Moses told this to the Israelites; but they would not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery.

¹⁰Then the Lord spoke to Moses, ¹¹“Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his land.” ¹²But Moses spoke to the Lord, “The Israelites have not listened to me; how then shall Pharaoh listen to me, poor speaker that I am?” ¹³Thus the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them orders regarding the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt, charging them to free the Israelites from the land of Egypt.

- This story was told over and over again in Israelite circles, and as the years passed there was an increasing tendency to stress the miraculous aspect of it. Such an interpretation need not be given it and may not have been in the earliest accounts.
- Plagues of frogs, gnats and flies are common occurrences in the Nile Delta, and hail, locusts, and darkness are natural phenomena that recur with regularity in the region.
- The Red Sea may have been the Sea of Reeds, a marshy area of fresh water that lay between the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Suez. The shallow water often blows back from time to time.

Covenant on Mt. Sinai

Exodus 20:1-21



Then God spoke all these words: ²I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;³you shall have no other gods before me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. ⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

- ⁸Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁰But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.¹¹For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

- ¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. ¹³You shall not murder.¹⁴You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵You shall not steal. ¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

- ¹⁸When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, ¹⁹and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die.” ²⁰Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin.” ²¹Then the people stood at a distance, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

Suzerainty (sovereign) Treaty

- Most important occurrence that day.
- Here Moses took a form of organization of the political life of his time and applied it to the relationship between God and God's people.
- Suzerainty treaties were the means by which the reigning king reached out to bring smaller and weaker nations under his control and protection.
- With the exception of the acts of Jesus himself, it is the most important contribution ever made in the history of religions to describe the dealings God has with humankind.

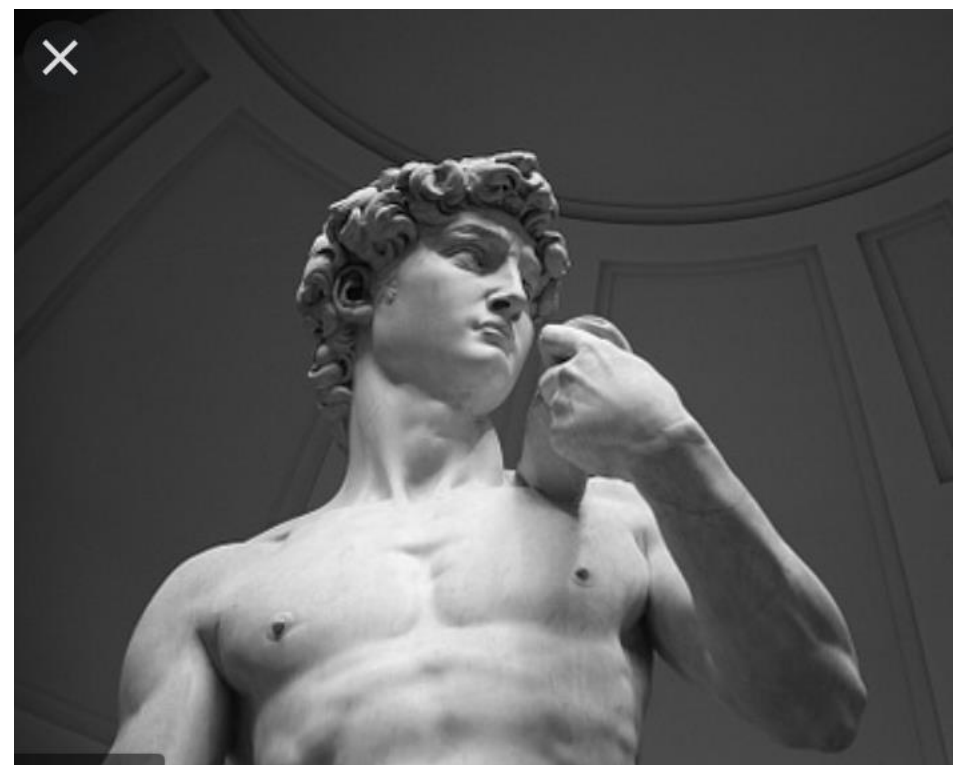


Summer Bible School

First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe
Pioneering Persons and the Early Jesus Movement
June 20, 2021

David, the King





David, the King

- Remembered as a just and God-fearing king.
- From the tribe of Judah and the town of Bethlehem. Much of his early life shrouded in legend. Youngest of eight sons of Jess and by all accounts a person with great charm and ability.
- Stories of his early life sound like similar ones that grew up around those of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.
- The name David: no Israelite before this man had carried it, and as far as we know, none afterward. It may, at first, been not a proper name but a title which meant “leader” or “chief.”

Israel, Hebrew, Jew

- Israel– the most sweeping name, with a political connotation. Twelve tribes -> kingdom of David and Solomon -> northern kingdom -> general term for the people as a whole or for some portion of them.
- Hebrew is basically a sociological reference. A Hebrew (or *Habiru*, *khapiru*, or *apiru*) has a history dating back centuries in every part of the ancient world. It refers to people who were outcasts of society (those in debt, slaves or former slaves, those disappointed with the ruling government and who were at odds with the establishment).
- Jew had a primarily religious meaning, a contraction of the name of the people of Judah and described those in exile in Babylon who recast their faith and retained their religious identity.

David was a talented kingdom-builder

- Began as a Hebrew chiefton
- Survived the ghastly wars between the Philistines and the Israelites.
- A military man of outstanding ability.
- After death of King Saul, he quickly consolidated his power and became ruler over both Judah and Israel.
- Captured the city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites and made it “the city of David,” the political and religious center of his expanding kingdom.
- Lying on the spine of a mountain, Jerusalem measured only 1300 by 325 feet. Had been in existence for 1000 years.

Established a kingdom where justice reigned

- Inherited a long tradition of justice in Israel, rooted in both Moses and the patriarchs, called by the name of “Torah.”
- The Torah involved the two concepts that we know as “case law” and “legal precedent.”
- The precedents, principles of law, were largely summed up in the Ten Commandments. Elders of the people would gather at the gate of the city and anyone who had a grievance against a neighbor would come and present their case.
- The King’s role, more administrative and not judicial, would see that justice was done.

- At least this was so in the early part of his reign. In his later reign the process began to break down. David's machinery for justice was simply not comprehensive enough to meet the new demands placed upon it.
- Torah had been designed to work in the local village and clan, but now David was governing a kingdom far larger than had been envisioned by the designers of Torah.
- Justice began to fail because David could not work out the technical problems of developing systems by which justice could be delivered to the diverse citizenry of his realm.

The main reason justice wavered

- David began to move away from the covenant by which Moses had bound the people to God.
- Instead of the people promising to organize their lives in ways that reflected their direct accountability to God, here God promised to protect the kingdom, and God's promise was so binding that not even wrongdoing on the part of the monarch would cause God to break this promise.
- God was irrevocably bound to protect the kingdom, but the kingdom was not irrevocably bound to be faithful to God. This was a giant step toward the basic heresy of the pagan nations: uniting throne and altar.

David remembered as a God-fearing King, who, along with the people, worshiped Yahweh

- Transported the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem and to enshrine it there as the central object of worship for the Israelite people.
- His aim was to make Jerusalem the religious as well as the political capital of his country.
- David established the ark and its priesthood in the official national shrine, and this act did more to bind the loyalties of the tribes of Israel to Jerusalem than any of us can possibly imagine.
- New psalms were composed for liturgical use and old ones were gathered from all portions of the empire for the celebrations of the Temple.

Elijah, the Prophet

The one who
challenged the
policies of King Ahab
(869-850 BCE)



Elijah, the Prophet

- Ahab was perpetuating the basic pagan heresy begun in the time of Solomon and espoused by Ahab's own father, King Omri of Israel: the marriage of throne and altar.
- In order to link his kingdom in commercial treaties with other principalities, he married a young woman who was the daughter of the Sidonian priest-king Ethbaal. Her name was Jezebel.
- While Ahab was relatively tolerant in matters of religion, Jezebel was not. Her name and her father's name were both compounded with the name of their god, the baal, and Jezebel meant to live up to her name.

- Jezebel immediately began to persecute the priests and worshipers of Yahweh and in the purge, as far as was within her power, she wiped out the worship and worshipers of Israel's God.
- In the lands where the baals were supreme, the king considered himself not only the primary political officer of the state but also the nation's chief spokesman for God.
- In other words, the king was the absolute ruler, both king and high priest, and anyone who attacked the policies of the king was in effect attacking God.

Elijah and the prophets of baal (I Kings 18)

- Elijah, whose name means “My God is Yahweh,” was from a little village, Tishbe in Gilead, east of the Jordan River.
- Israel was experiencing one of the worst droughts in its history; for three dreadful years there had been no rain. Elijah announced that the drought had been caused by the policies of King Ahab.
- This announcement challenged the prophets of baal in the very sphere of their power, as they insisted their god was the god of fertility. Elijah maintained that Yahweh’s authority extended over the fertility of the land as well as all other spheres of life.

Elijah challenging the prophets of baal



Elijah forced to flee (1 Kings 19:1-18)

- Hardly had he won this fiery victory when he was forced to flee from Israel. Jezebel vowed to destroy Elijah and he stood for in Israel.
- The prophet traveled forty days and forty nights into the desert to the south. “Forty” is the traditional number of years that Israel journeyed into the wilderness, and Elijah was clearly retracing the steps of that journey.
- On the mountain, much like what Moses experienced at Sinai, Elijah experienced an earthquake, then a wind, then fire, the traditional phenomena that linked Yahweh to this sacred mountain, but God was in none of these. Rather, a still, small voice, an awesome silence.

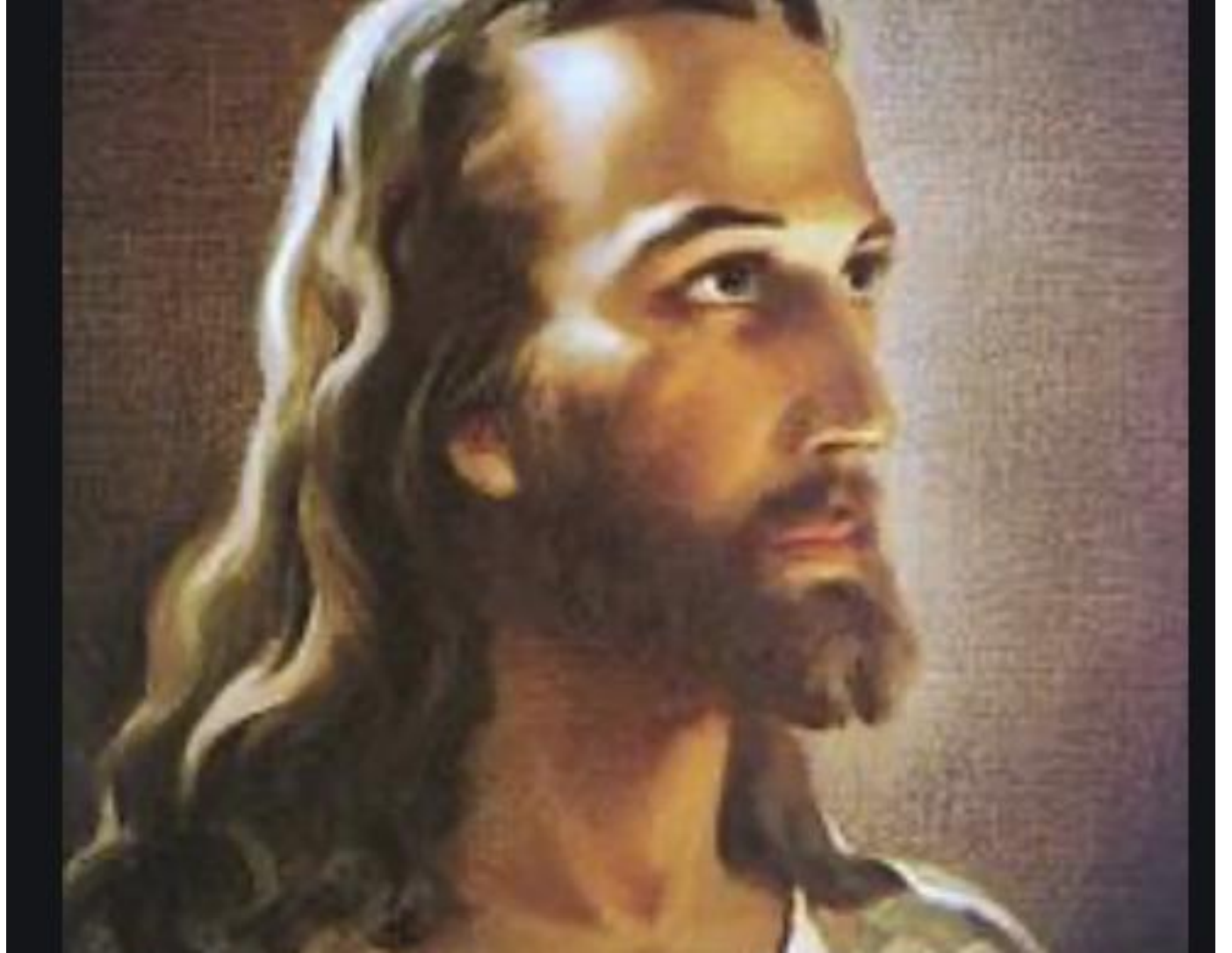
In that silence came a message

- Elijah complained bitterly to Yahweh, “I, I only am left, and I am no better than my fathers,” and no longer had the strength to stand up to the paganizing forces surrounding him in his nation.
- “Get off your knees,” God told the prophet, “and go back to Israel. There are seven thousand left who have never bowed the knee to baal. Go with your message and uphold them in their faith.”

Naboth and the vineyard (I Kings 21:1-29)

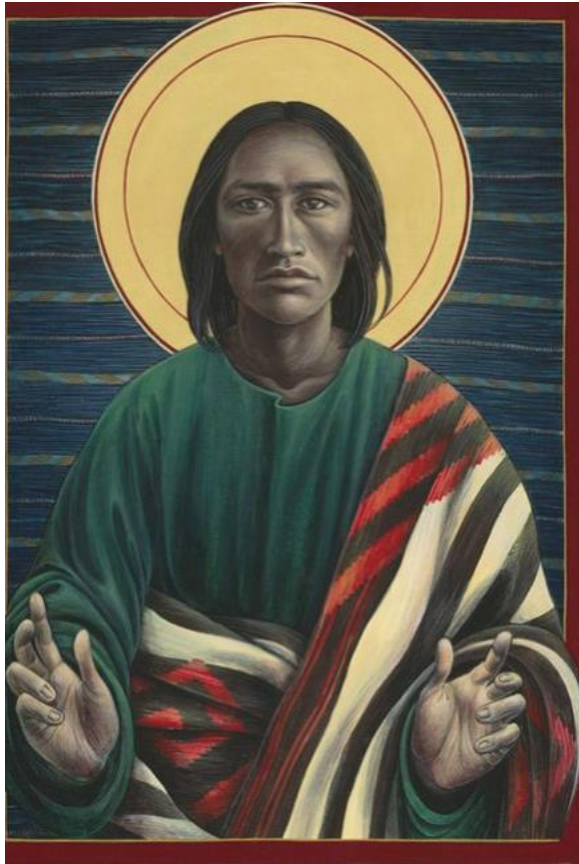
- Ahab wanted a vineyard, owned by Naboth and his sons, which adjoined his palace so that he could expand his house. They refused and eventually, with Jezebel's assistance, they were put to death.
- Elijah stood in the vineyard and pronounced sentence upon Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab repented, Jezebel did not, and Jezebel was cast from the palace window "and the horses trampled her body into the ground."
- In the religion of Yahweh, all behavior was accountable to the living God. **The basic insight Elijah offered: the main religious problem of humankind is not atheism but idolatry.**

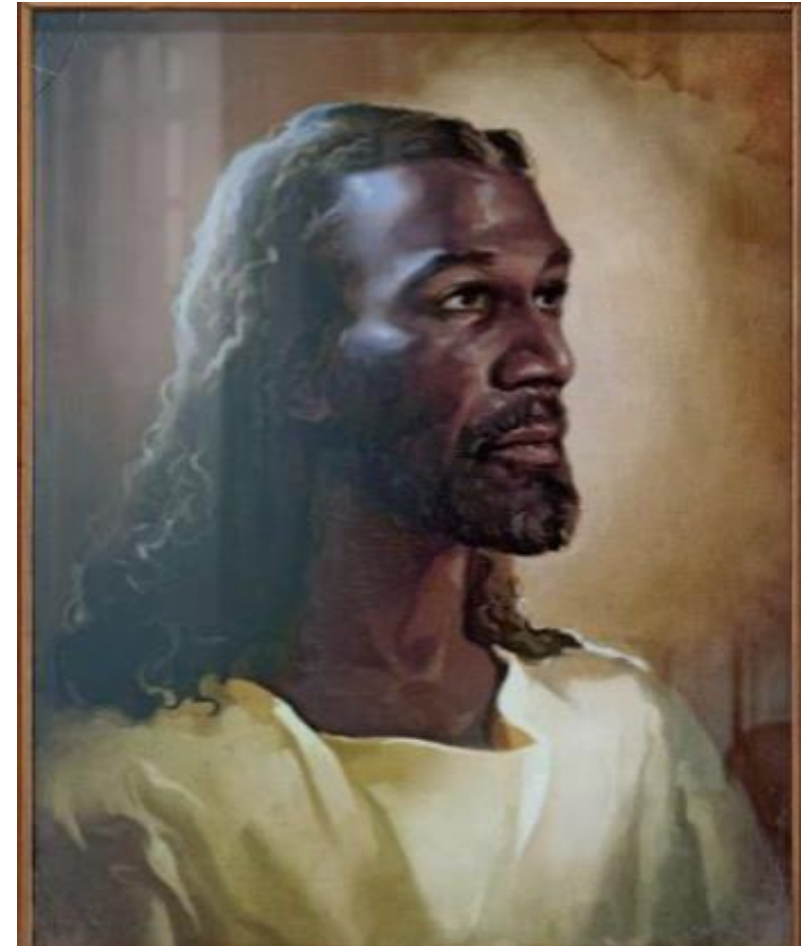
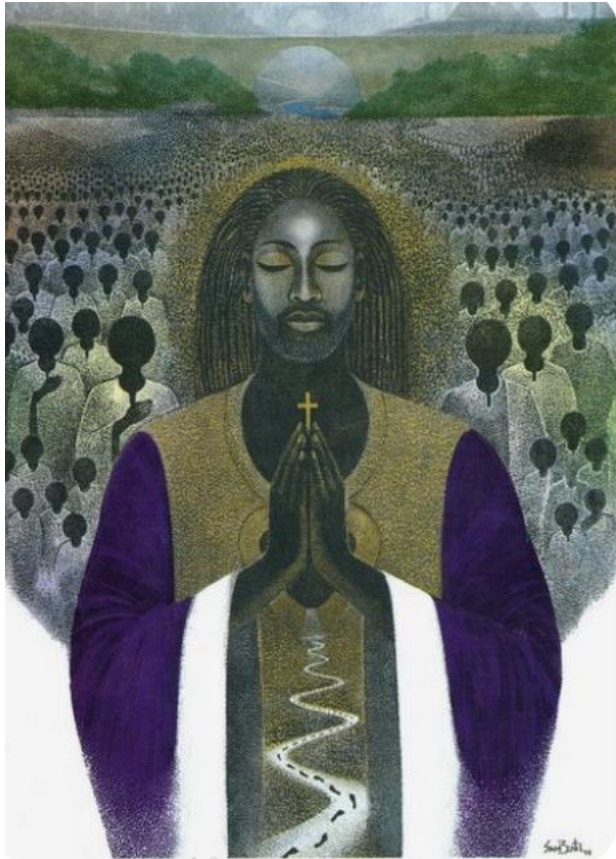
Jesus, the Christ

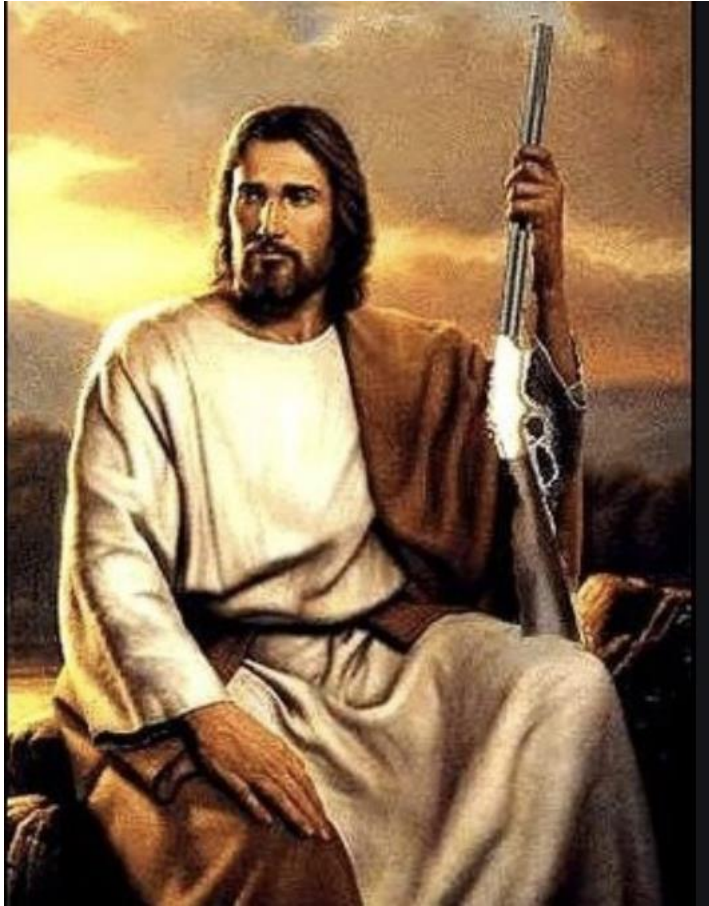




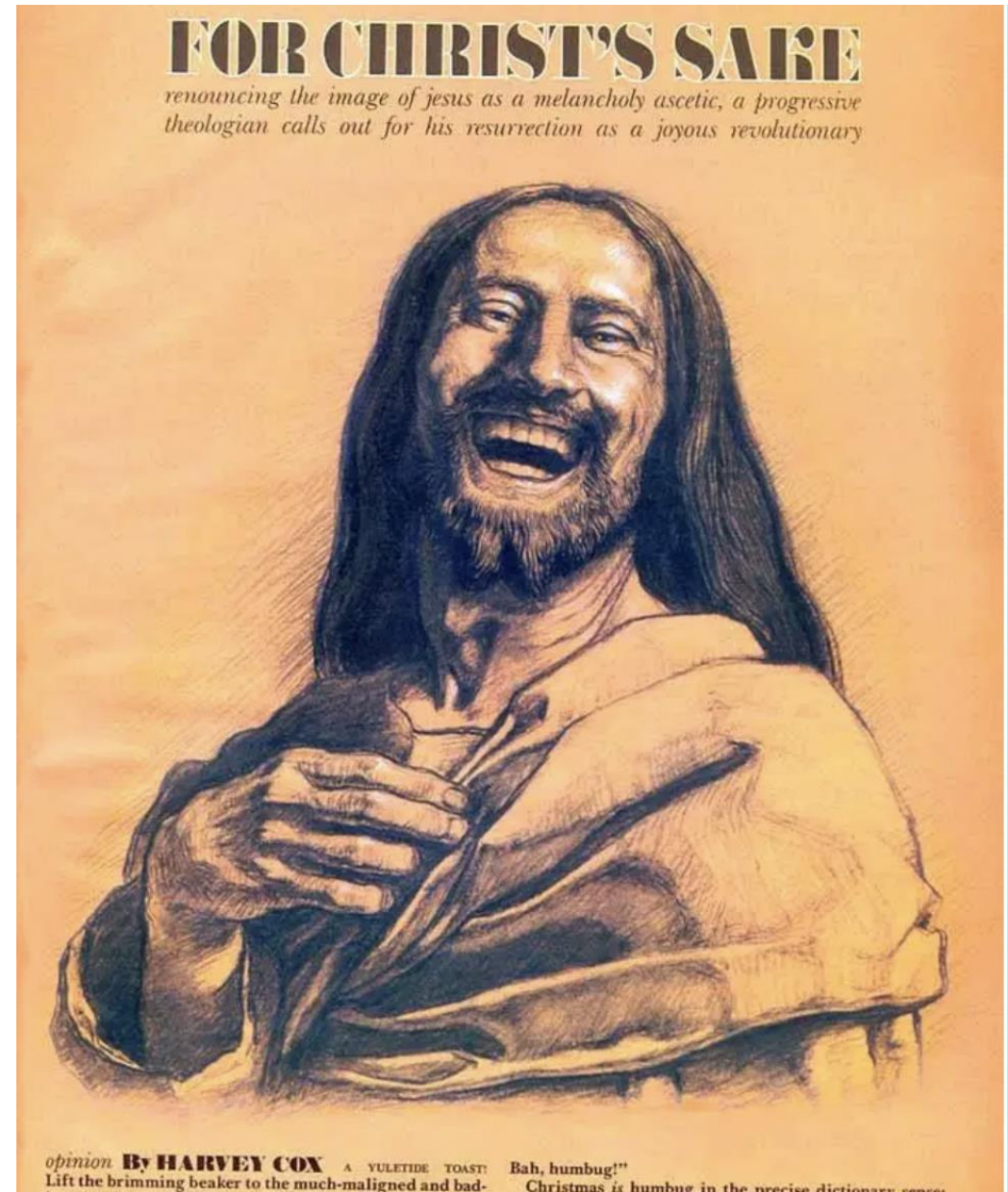
Jesus, the Christ







What is your
image of
Jesus?



Biography

- Nothing in the external details of his life would have indicated the uniqueness Jesus was to show
- Born in Bethlehem of Judea about 4 BCE, he died some thirty years later in Jerusalem
- His parentage was not distinguished; though his father, Joseph the carpenter, traced his lineage to the House of David, nothing else is known of him, and little more of his mother Mary.
- Most of Jesus' life was lived in obscurity in Galilee near such anonymous villages as Nazareth, Cana, and Capernaum.

- His ministry was unbelievably short, at most three years and perhaps as little as eighteen months
- We know little of his education; he could read the Scripture and he was on occasion called rabbi, but he never claimed to be trained in the rabbinic schools of Judaism nor in the Hellenistic philosophies of the Roman world.
- He did not leave to posterity a single word of his own writing
- Yet he lived a life that in the eyes of millions of people seemed to incorporate the presence of God.

Jesus, the Christ

- Gave God a new name: Abba
- Demonstrated more profoundly than Moses the nature of God as deliverer
- Re-established and perfected the covenant between God and God's people
- Began his public ministry with the words "The Kingdom of God is at hand."
- Left a model of justice unsurpassed in the world's annals: love the values that God loves and respect other persons as God respects them.

- Called people to be loyal to the authority of God
- In the Lord's prayer he set forth an unforgettable picture of God
- Leader of people
- Teacher without peer
- A compassionate human being to whose love beggar, prostitute, leper and tax collector, as well as prophet, rabi, merchant and householder responded with their own.
- Did what he said he would do, and said only that which he would be able to support with the commitment of his life.

- He was willing to suffer in order to identify with other suffering people;
- Gave up his home to relate to the homeless
- His reputation to associate with the outcasts
- His life to die beside criminals
- Death was incredibly painful: physical from the cross; emotional from the loss of friends and companions at this critical moment; spiritual pain worst of all—where was the God he served so buoyantly?

Present with us still

- In the interval after his death, the resurrected Jesus showed himself not as a fleeting memory, but as a responding presence;
- He did not recede into a distant past but called his followers to a hopeful future;
- He opened insights into life styles appropriate for every time and place;
- The living spirit of Jesus Christ remains available to those who are loyal to him, and his spirit seeks out those who are not conscious of his near approach.

Parties in the Early Jesus Movement

Parties	The Twelve	Brethren	Apostles	Hellenists
Beginning Event	Jesus' call in Galilee	Coming of Spirit at Pentecost	Possibility of world mission	Split with Hebrews
Governance	Peter, the Twelve, the 70	James Elders	Paul; Assembly of Apostles; Barnabas	Seven Deacons Phillip Beloved Disciple
Mission Targets	Galilee, Gaza	Hebrew-speaking synagogues	Diaspora synagogues; Godfearers; Gentile friends	Greek-speaking synagogues
Composition of the party	Jewish men, some women	Jewish men and their families	Jew, Greek; Slave, free; Man, woman	Greek speaking Jews and their families

Parties in the Early Jesus Movement

Circumcision	Yes for Jewish men, No for Gentiles	Jewish males Males of proselytes	Jewish men could be; Gentiles need not	Jewish males
Food laws	Yes and No	Kept all kosher laws	Tried but failed to keep provisions of Jerusalem conference	Did or did not keep food laws, as convenient
Marriage	Jewish men and women	Married Jewish women	Marriage open to all	Married Jewish and Greek women
Parties	The Twelve	Brethren	Apostles	Hellenists

Parties in the Early Jesus Movement (continued)

Places of Worship	Synagogues, homes, Temple	Temple Synagogues House worship	Temple Synagogues House worship	Synagogues House churches
Role of Jesus	Servant of God	Designated as Messiah at death Son of David	Crucified and risen Lord	Son of Humankind, Incarnate of God
Theological Self-Understanding	Successor to Israel, the "True Israel"	Covenant renewed	Those "in Christ"	New Israel or "Israel as originally constituted"
Primary Ethical Principle	"Take up your cross and follow me"	"Seek God's righteousness"	"Bear one another's burdens"	"Love one another as I have loved you"
	The Twelve	Brethren	Apostles	Hellenists

Parties in the Early Jesus Movement (continued)

Writings	Gospel of Mark First Peter	Matthew James Jude Revelation	Luke, Acts, all other letters assigned to “Paul”	John Hebrews Letters of John
Terminating Event	Death of leaders under Herod Agrippa	Death of James and other leaders Jewish War 66- 70	Continued after 70 AD	Continued after 70 AD

Summary of Study from Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*

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Summary of Study from Stark, The Rise of Christianity

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- To cities faced with epidemics, fires, earthquakes, the Church offered nursing services
- To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, the Church offered a new basis for social solidarity
- **To the Greek and Roman cities, the Church provided new norms and new kinds of ways to cope with urgent urban problems**

By putting Jesus Christ at the center of their lives, the Church set out a moral vision utterly incompatible with the casual cruelty of pagan custom