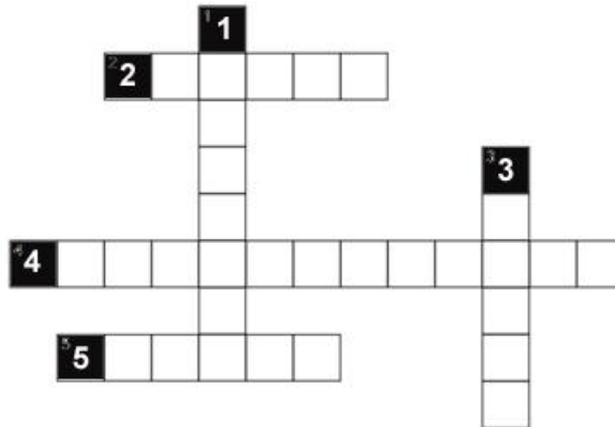


Crossword for Muslims and other religious people



ACROSS

- 2 That worldview is also found in the world's bestseller, translated in over 6300 languages.
- 4 Worldview of Harry Potter, Twilight, The Exorcist, Jinns, Angels, Demons, Phirs, Ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks, etc.
- 5 He is the central person of the Bible.

DOWN

- 1 Human and divine beings representing God's interests.
- 3 It is central to the story of the Bible.

Introduction

The death of Jesus Christ at the cross and His resurrection from the dead on the third day is absolutely central to followers of Jesus within all Christian denominations.¹ It is remembered annually and described as the power of God to those who believe. Yet, at the same time it is foolishness to many others.²

For example, Muslims say, "God would never allow Himself to be seen as so weak that He could not protect His beloved prophet from evil people." Followers of Jesus respond, "Where does God receive more glory and honour: If He lets Jesus run away from problems, or when Jesus faces the challenges and through God Is raised from the dead?"

As with any crossword, the puzzle is more solvable when the wider context is considered. In a crucial examination of the cross of Christ, God needs to reveal clues to lead to a right understanding. You will only find what you are told to look for. It is insufficient just to ask, "Did Jesus die?" The reasons why he did must be examined. Many good videos and articles have already been produced, doing exactly that.³ This article adds another major part to a larger consideration—an understanding of the God-given worldview in which the Bible was

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 All Bible passages are taken from the NIV translation, 2011.

² 1 Corinthians 1:18

³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kfea4VgpYM> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Och8Juff88Y>
http://www.answering-islam.org/authors/oskar/origin_sacrifice.html
<http://www.christianityexplained.net/explainedto/muslims/8.html>,
<http://www.christianityexplained.net/explainedto/muslims/7.html> For Ahmadis:
<http://www.christianityexplained.net/explainedto/muslims/response.to.where.did.jesus.die.pdf>

revealed. Much work has been produced to prove from the Quran⁴ and secular history⁵ that the foundation of our study, the Judeo-Christian scriptures are substantially unaffected by textual changes.

This article gives God's perspective, a point of view from which the world must be interpreted. God's supernatural worldview explains why Christ's death on the cross is crucial. The practical implications of this position on our lives is examined.⁶

Summary

The Bible teaches that God created the universe. He chose to give life to supernatural and human beings to worship Him by ruling over the invisible and visible world as His representatives. These imagers were given abilities, such as intelligence, creativity and free will to fulfil their purpose. Both types of beings failed shamefully. Therefore, God chose to put the nations under the authority of supernatural and human rulers, while the people of Israel would be His only inheritance. Through them all nations on earth would one day be blessed again. They were given the opportunity to re-join His family.

Israel initially failed too, but out of that tiny and weak nation arose the ultimate Messiah: Jesus Christ succeeded through the apparent weakness of the cross! Read on to find out how this incredible story is backed up by Scripture.

The biblical worldview

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Col. 2:15)

Verses like this move an attentive reader to realize there is more to the story of the cross than meets the eye. The powers and authorities described as being defeated, disarmed, and publically humiliated does not refer to human rulers. They remained in charge during and after Christ's days on earth. Neither would such a glorious victory have been possible if Jesus had been replaced by someone who looked like him⁷, or if He fainted instead of dying on the cross. Such an outcome could not be described as a triumph but as shameful damage control at best.

Other Bible passages, such as Ephesians 6:12 make it clear that a supernatural world is described:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers⁸, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

⁴ [youtube.com/watch?v=IP1i2HWFxQ0&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP1i2HWFxQ0&feature=youtu.be)
christianityexplained.net/explainedto/muslims/26.html answering-islam.org/Responses/Menj/q2_77-79.htm

⁵ thejesusaccounts.tv

⁶ Source for Biblical world view material: Heiser, Michael S.. The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible

⁷ Surah 4:157-159

⁸ Greek 'Archas.' In Daniel 10:13 Michael is called 'archonton' one of the chief princes, in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It was used in Jesus' day.

The picture painted in Colossians 2:15 ". . . comes from a common Roman military practice. When a general won a victory, a triumphal procession made its way through the streets, with the successful general leading the way. His army followed, singing songs of conquest and reveling in their victory. At the end of the procession were the defeated king and his warriors, subjected to public ridicule and paraded for all to see. On the cross, Jesus won a decisive victory, making clear to the universe that Satan is a vanquished foe. This does not mean that we will not have conflict. The devil has been defeated, but he has not yet conceded defeat. He has been overthrown, but he has not yet been fully eliminated. Satan continues to harass us. When we understand our identity in Christ, we can live above Satan's control."⁹

Our original identity and purpose

Human identity is deeply rooted in the supernatural worldview underlying the story of the Bible:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. (Genesis 1:1-3)

The one and only God reveals Himself, His Spirit and His word that spoke the world into being.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:26-28)

God speaks here to the members of his divine council, his non human family and household.¹⁰ The function of those beings is to worship God.¹¹ He is self sufficient and does not need their advice but desires to let them take part in His rule out of love. They are creatively involved in carrying out His sovereign will, using their free will, as His representatives in heaven, the unseen realm.¹² Similarly, out of love parents let their small children take part in cleaning, cooking, etc.

⁹ Anders, M. (1999). Galatians-Colossians (Vol. 8, pp. 307–308). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

¹⁰ God does not speak to the members of the Trinity since all of them are all knowing. They do not need to be told what is being done.

¹¹ Psalm 29:1-2 God is their creator: Psalm 89:6-7; 95:3; 97:9; 136:2; 148:1-5, Deuteronomy 10:17, 1 Kings 8:23

¹² Job 1:6, 1 King 22:16-23, Daniel 4:13-17,24-26; 7:9-10, Isaiah 24:23, Revelations 4-5, John 1:19-23,29-31, compare with Isaiah 40:1 where all four commands are in plural, speaking to a group, other than Israel to which they are to talk. John answers the call like other prophets before him in Jeremiah 23:16-22, Isaiah 6:8

At certain stages of that privileged involvement some of His representatives failed, because God alone is perfect.¹³ Supernatural beings are known elsewhere in the Bible as gods, sons of God, powers, rulers, watchers, holy ones, authorities, demons, and angels.¹⁴ God announces to His divine council that He is about to create human beings in his image as He did with them. The council members did not participate in the creation of humankind. They just watched, as they did when God laid the foundations of the earth (Job 38:7).

Dr. Michael S. Heiser, a Semitic language expert writes: "Humankind was created as God's image. If we think of imaging as a verb or function, that translation makes sense. We are created to image God, to be his imagers. It is what we are by definition. The image is not an ability we have, but a status. We are God's representatives on earth. To be human is to image God. This is why Genesis 1:26-27 is followed by what theologians call the 'dominion mandate' in verse 28. The verse informs us that God intends us to be him on this planet. We are to create more imagers ('be fruitful and multiply . . . fill') in order to oversee the earth by stewarding its resources and harnessing them for the benefit of all human imagers ('subdue . . . rule over')¹⁵

To truly represent God, He shares His attributes with His imagers, including freedom expressed in free will. They serve as a means to fulfill our honourable role, but at the same time can be abused, leading to evil and suffering in His heavenly and earthly families. If God eliminated both, He would have to destroy all His representatives. Fortunately, His plans are far better.

Trouble in paradise

⁸ Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed . . . ¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Genesis 2:8,15)

The Garden of Eden was a tiny plot on earth, also known as *holy mountain*.¹⁶ It was not just inhabited by Adam and Eve. According to the Bible and other people of the Ancient Near East, like Egypt and Mesopotamia, such places were the home of God and His council on earth.¹⁷ These resemblances do not confirm pagan religions but are used many times by God to criticize and correct them.

From that center of power, the original task of humans, God's representatives on earth, was to,

¹³ Job 4:17-19; 15:14-15. Others remained loyal: Hebrews 1:14; 2:10-18, practicing Christians have positionally replaced the corrupt members of the divine council: Galatians 3:26-29, Revelations 3.21, John 1:12; 3:1-3; 1 Corinthians 6:3, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 Corinthians 15:35-49,

¹⁴ For example, the hebrew word 'elohim', 'gods', is used for God (Genesis 1.1) demons (Deuteronomy 32:17), humans in the afterlife (1 Samuel 28:13). The Hebrew word 'malak' corresponds to the Greek word 'angelos' and is translated as angel. It simply means 'messenger' describing a task by a divine being, not their ontology, what they are. Similarly, humans can have different tasks.

¹⁵ Heiser, Michael S.. The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible (Kindle Locations 747-752). Lexham Press. Kindle Edition.

¹⁶ Ezekiel 28:13-14

¹⁷ Heiser, Michael S.. Ibid. Kindle Locations 774-785. Therefore, Eve was not frightened when the serpent spoke to her in Genesis 3:1. It was later identified as a supernatural being, Satan, the devil in Revelations 12:9. See also Ezekiel 28:2; 12-17, Isaiah 14:4-15, Job 38:7 where a parallel is drawn between actions of earthly rulers and a heavenly one.

“Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:28)

Although God created the earth as *very good* (Hebrew *tob*), it was not perfect, like Eden.¹⁸ Adam and Eve could eat from all the trees in the garden, except the tree of knowledge of good and evil; otherwise, they would die.¹⁹

The phrase *knowledge of good and evil* in context of other biblical passages²⁰ means that once they ate from that tree, they were no longer innocent, like some of the gods (elohim) mentioned earlier. God had foreknowledge that Adam and Eve would disobey but He did not necessarily predestine it.²¹

After the blatant rebellion against God, punishment quickly followed. Satan, who instigated the tragedy, was shamed and expelled from his high position and role in heaven to the lowest realm of the dead. An ongoing conflict between the followers of God and human and divine beings who follow the spiritual path of the devil²² by opposing God's plan was predicted. One offspring of the woman would win against Satan at a tremendous cost to himself. This solution had to be God-initiated and empowered, since the other party of the problem—human beings—died, first in terms of their relationship with God and later physically as a result of the conflict. In such a pitiful state no amount of good deeds propagated by religions as probable resolution would make any difference.

The woman was to suffer increased pain in child bearing and in relationship with her husband. Through him the ground was cursed and as a result he experienced a lot of difficulties in his work until their physical death. Both had to leave paradise, killing off their personal spiritual relationship with God.²³

Trouble after paradise

When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them,² the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.³ Then the Lord said, “My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.”

⁴ The Nephilim ['gigas' 'giants', Septuagint] were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when²⁴ the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.⁵ The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every

¹⁸ Genesis 1:31, Hebrew words such as 'tom' convey completeness, perfection where nothing was lacking or in need of any improvement.

¹⁹ Genesis 2:16-17

²⁰ Genesis 3:5 (second instance of 'elohim' should be translated as gods, in context of verse 22, Psalms 8:5, 82:1, Hebrews 2:7) Deuteronomy 1:39,

²¹ 1 Samuel 23:1-1-13, 1 Kings 22:13-23

²² John 8:44, Mathew 23:33, 1 John 3:8-12, 1 Peter 1:23, Genesis 6:5

²³ Genesis 3:14-19 in light of footnote 15.

²⁴ This could be translated 'whenever', meaning it happened repeatedly after the flood. Others argue that the flood only occurred regionally which would have enabled the giants to survive it.

inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. (Genesis 6:1-5)

Supernatural beings are referred to with the phrase *sons of God*.²⁵ Their offspring is known as giants, heroes, men of renown, according to Mesopotamian literature and Jewish traditions based on 1 Enoch 6-11. Those who argue differently since the late fourth century AD face a number of serious interpretive problems.²⁶

Contrary to Babylonian beliefs, the giants who were around before and after the flood were not representing the true God with their knowledge and deeds. Instead, they were the result of a rebellion against Him by lesser divine beings who spread false teachings and corruption throughout the world.

Trouble after the flood

As a result of these horrific incidents that lead to unspeakable evil, God brought about the flood as a divine punishment. Yet, even after the survival of Noah and his family, the wickedness of humans continued.²⁷ They were still unwilling to obey God's renewed covenant command to fill the earth. Instead, they tried to make a name for themselves by building a city and a tower reaching to the heavens. God confused their language and scattered them over the earth.²⁸ This passage describes in detail what happened that fateful day:

⁸ When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of god.²⁹ ⁹ For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance. (Deuteronomy 32:8-9)

God punished the nations by placing them under the authority of lesser gods, members of His divine council. They later fell into disobedience themselves. All the citizens of those nations are since then being oppressed by false religions that allow terrible injustice:³⁰

¹ God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the "gods". ² "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? ³ Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. ⁴ Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. ⁵ "The 'gods' know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. ⁶ "I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.'

²⁵ See also Jude 5-7, 2 Peter 2:1-10

²⁶ For more details see Heiser, Michael S.. The Unseen Realm (Kindle Locations 1774-1947) Unlike here, Matthew 22:23-33 talks about the resurrection and the fact that angels do not marry then. There will be no need for procreation in eternal life. That passage does not say they cannot have sexual relationships now. Besides, the truth that God took on a human nature in Jesus from conception, is far more spectacular than sons of god having children with daughters of men. For other instances where angels took on a human body see: Matthew 4:11; 28:5 Mark 1:13, Acts 5:19; 12:7. It could also be possible that the giants came about supernaturally, in a similar way as Isaac was born to Sarah, even though she was too old to have children.

²⁷ Genesis 7-9

²⁸ Genesis 11

²⁹ The correct reading 'sons of God' (not 'sons of Israel') is found in the Dead Sea scrolls and the Septuagint. It is confirmed by the fact that Israel did not exist at the time the nations were divided.

³⁰ They came under the authority of Satan according to Matthew 4:8-9, John 12:31, Revelations 12:9.

⁷ But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler.” ⁸ Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance. (Psalm 82:1-8)

Freedom is coming! God will one day judge the earth by taking back all nations to be his inheritance. He brought about His plans by choosing people like Abraham, his supernaturally born son Isaac and Jacob whose twelve sons would later become His chosen nation of Israel. It was God's inheritance, a unique geographical holy land.³¹ Through it He would one day bless all nations and bring them back to Himself.³²

God visits His chosen people

“Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran. ³ ‘Leave your country and your people,’ God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’” (Acts 7:2-3)

God was already setting a pattern by being described as *walking in the Garden*.³³ He was searching for Adam and Eve; they hid from Him because of the shame, fear and guilt, caused by their sin. The Book of Acts says He visibly appeared to Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran. This was followed by a number of other physical, divine encounters.³⁴

How is such an extraordinary thing possible? God is totally unlike anything in human experience. Nobody can see Him in His full glory and live. Yet, the Bible mentions times when people saw Him face to face. The law of non-contradiction states, 'A cannot equal not-A at the same time and in the same relationship.' God's solution was to change the relationship by veiling Himself in the form of a human being also known as 'the Angel of the Lord' in the Torah, enabling us to be protected and at the same time to detect Him.³⁵

Yet, at times, the Angel of the Lord and the Lord God Himself are both simultaneously present in stories, such as when God speaks to Moses out of the burning bush.³⁶ The teaching found in the New Testament about Jesus being God in essence, yet different from God the Father and the Holy Spirit in person is rooted in the Old Testament already. It was

³¹ Deuteronomy 4:19-20, Psalms 82, 1 Samuel 26:17-19, 2 Kings 5:15-19, Daniel 10:6-21.

³² Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:6, Deuteronomy 10:17, Acts 17:26-31, Galatians 3:26-29.

³³ Genesis 3:8

³⁴ Genesis 12:1-7; 15:1-6, compare verse 4 with John 1:1,14; 8:56, 58, Galatians 3:8, 1 Samuel 3:1-21, Genesis 18:1-5,25; Jeremiah 1:6,9, Genesis 22:1-2, 10-18 (the wording blurs the distinction between God and the Angel (lit. malak, messenger) of God, Genesis 26:1-5, 23-25; 28:10-22, 31:11-13; 32:22-30, compare with Hosea 12:3-4; Genesis 48:1-4, 14-16.

³⁵ Genesis 32:30, Exodus 33:11,20, John 1:18, 1 John 4:12.

³⁶ Exodus 3:1-6,14 compare with Acts 7:30-35. That story is mentioned in Surah 20:10-48, 27:8-11, 28:30. See also Exodus 23:20-23: A special angel goes before the people of Israel on their way to the promised land. He will not forgive transgressions. Only God has the authority to forgive sins or not. God's name is in him, meaning God himself, his very presence or essence, according to Leviticus 11:45, Joshua 24:17-18, Judges 2:1, Deuteronomy 4:37. 'The name' (ha-shem) functions as a personified substitute, as presence for God in Isaiah 30:27-28, Psalm 20:1,7; Deuteronomy 12:2, 4-5, 11. The concept is applied to Jesus in John 17:5-6, 11-12, 25-26, Romans 10:9-13, quoting Joel 2:32, Jude 5 according to very early manuscripts Alexandrinus and Vaticanus. He showed them who God is and what He is like, being the 'hypostasis', 'essence, actual being, reality' of God in Hebrews 1.3; Joshua 5:13-15 compared with the drawn sword in Numbers 22:23, 1 Chronicles 21:16, Judges 2:1-4; 6:11-24: The Angel of God leaves in verse 21 but God is still there in verse 23.

known in ancient Jewish theology as *two powers in heaven* or *two Yahweh figures* until the second century AD.³⁷

This is difficult to understand because trying to explain God to men is like trying to explain a cube to a two dimensional being. A two dimensional being could never understand a cube. He would see it as a square. Even if you turned the cube to show another side, his mind simply could not comprehend changes made in three dimensional space. To a two-dimensional being, the green square would disappear and the red square would appear.



The two dimensional being would then say, 'hey that's a different cube'. We would say 'no, it is still the same cube. Yes, you are right it is a different square but it is still part of the same cube'. We could then show him all six sides of the cube and tell him that all of them were part of the same cube. Yet all he would see are six squares appearing and disappearing before him. He would not see the cube rotating from one side to the other. He would not see the cube in its entirety, or being able to imagine the physics, or the shape of the cube. It exists in a higher dimension than he does. All

that he could do is to trust our word: The six separate squares he saw are actually part of one object called a cube. It is similar to when God tries to explain Himself to us. Clearly He is everywhere (omnipresent). That means He is above our and all other dimensions and therefore beyond human understanding. God is explaining His form to us in hyper dimensional terms where the physics allow beings to be more than one person (like the cube that has more than one side). Yet, we still think in terms of three dimensional laws where all beings must only be one person. Since God is beyond the three and all other dimensions, He has to be greater than them. He would only make sense if He were more than a unitarian (three dimensional) being like we are. The one God revealed Himself in the Bible as three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

To deny the Trinity necessitates redefining God. He can only be all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, and self-sufficient as a being who combines multiplicity within His unity.

How monumental is this? Around 2,000 years ago they did not have today's science of hyper dimensions. So they came up with the term trinity in an attempt to explain what God had told them about Himself. This is monumental because when man makes up a religion he makes up a god he can understand and make sense of. Only in the Bible do we see God who is beyond all dimensions and beyond the understanding capacity of humans.³⁸

³⁷ Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (reprint, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012). Michael S. Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin– Madison, 2004).

³⁸ Source: [youtube.com/watch?v=bUy-H5MmeGU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUy-H5MmeGU) [youtube.com/watch?v=G1FIAC3hz5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1FIAC3hz5c)

As in the past, and even today, those God chooses to represent Him must first meet Him personally. This happens in various ways. All followers of Jesus have a personal story to tell how they started the journey with Him.³⁹

God is victorious over the gods of the nations

The nations ruled by the lesser gods found out about who the true God is when He allowed His people to be oppressed and delivered from nations like Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria.⁴⁰

In Egypt, the fight was won by Israel, also called *the son of God* over Pharaoh, known from the fourth dynasty onward as the *son of Re* the high God and his pantheon.⁴¹ God spoke to Moses in the final stages of the battle:

"Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household . . . ⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, . . . ⁶ all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ⁷ Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs . . . ¹² On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt."

*²³ When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.
(Exodus 12:3, 5, 6-7, 12-13, 23)*

This passage is the basis of the Jewish festival of Passover during which the death of Jesus Christ at the cross occurred.

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"
(John 1:29)*

The story is full of symbolism. Like the Egyptians, we all have sinned and deserve death. Like the Israelites who trusted in the shed blood of the perfect lamb, we too will be saved from God's wrath⁴² if we repent and believe in Jesus who takes away our sins. Like the Israelites who were finally free to leave Egypt we too are free, no longer under the slavery of sin, if we trust in God's commands and solution in Jesus.

On the cross, Christ was victorious over sin, shame, fear, guilt, and Satan. His resurrection was God's vindication of that victory already won. It was a declaration of power that Jesus is who He claimed to be; it was a public demonstration for the seen and unseen world that confirmed His death was fully effective for the forgiveness of sin.

³⁹ John 3, Acts 2:1-13 compare with 2 Kings 2:1,11, Ezekiel 1:4, Acts 1:8.

⁴⁰ Exodus 5:2, Joshua 2:8-10, Numbers 14:15-16, 2 Samuel 7:23, Isaiah 37:36

⁴¹ britannica.com/topic/Re Exodus 4:23, Hosea 11:1

⁴² The destroyer (mashkhit) mentioned in Exodus 12:23 is identified as the Angel of the Lord who exercises divine judgment in Exodus 12: 23; 2 Samuel 24: 16-17; 1 Chronicles 21: 15; Zechariah 12: 8– 10.

The victory against the Egyptians was also won as a cosmic conflict in the visible and invisible world. After the Israelite crossing of the Red sea we read:

Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? (Exodus 15:11⁴³)

Along the way to the promised land, God revealed His law in the presence of witnesses, the divine council⁴⁴. The Israelites were commanded to be totally different from the nations *because of their position as His children, not in order to get into that honoured relationship.*⁴⁵ Keeping the law was a demonstration of their love and believing loyalty towards God. When they failed, God provided sacrifices and laws to cleanse them.⁴⁶

The heart of the law is to worship and love God alone.⁴⁷ King David and many others failed miserably, but they never loved and served different gods.⁴⁸ That is why they were forgiven. Sadly, many others worshipped different gods which brought judgement upon them. The same is true of Christians today.⁴⁹

All-out war to conquer the promised land

³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." ³² And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. ³³ We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them." (Numbers 13:31-33)

This passage is crucial to understand the various wars fought to possess the land of Israel. After the bad report given by the majority of spies to the Israelites, they refused to fight and as a result were sent back to the desert for 40 years.⁵⁰ It was left to the new generation to conquer the land under Joshua's leadership.

Their fight was not only against people of nations under the dominion of hostile gods but against their supernatural offspring mentioned in Genesis 6—the descendants of the

⁴³ See also Psalm 74:12-17 (alluding to Genesis 1:4-18) where the crossing of the Red Sea is described as splitting open the sea, defeating Leviatan, one of the sea monsters, giving him as food to desert dwelling creatures. This symbolic imagery is well known from the ancient literature of Ugarit. It describes how Baal allegedly became king of the gods, having power over nature. The message of Psalm 74 is that the God of Moses, not Baal, is truly in charge.

⁴⁴ Deuteronomy 33:1-4 in Septuagint has angels, Acts 7:53, Hebrews 2:2, Galatians 3:19-20 (the intermediary was God in human form according to Deuteronomy 3:9-10),

⁴⁵ Leviticus 19:2, Deuteronomy 4:6-8; 28:9-10,

⁴⁶ Leviticus 16, 7-10: One goat was sacrificed to God for the forgiveness of sins. Azazel can be translated as the 'goat that goes away' or 'scapegoat.' However, it is really a proper name (verse 8). According to the Dead sea Scrolls (4Q 180, 1: 8) and other ancient Jewish books (1 Enoch 8: 1; 9: 6; 10: 4– 8; 13: 1; 54: 5– 6; 55: 4; 69: 2), Azazel is a demon, the leader of the angels that sinned in Genesis 6:1-4. See B. Janowski, "Azazel," in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, 2nd ed. (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; Leiden; Boston; Cologne; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 128. The other goat was sent alive into the desert. It carried the sin of the people into Azazel's realm of death, where it belonged.

⁴⁷ Matthew 22:34-40

⁴⁸ 2 Samuel 11

⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 9:21, Galatians 6:2, Acts 4:12, Romans 11:17-24, Hebrews 3:19; 10:38-39.

⁵⁰ Numbers 14:33-35

Nephilim. As a detailed survey has concluded⁵¹ they alone were the target, that according to God's command, had to be eliminated. This makes perfect sense in light of the supernatural biblical worldview, in which God allows no compromise with the disobedient lesser gods and their offspring.

Tragically, not all those giants were eliminated.⁵² Instead, the Israelites compromised with them which led to worship of their gods at times and ultimately, to God's expulsion of His people from the land of promise. Exile was the inevitable result of their lack of loyalty to the one true God. Worship of Him alone stood at the heart of salvation and the promise of possession of the land in the Old Testament.⁵³

Israel's terrible history teaches that God's plan to rule the earth and the universe⁵⁴ in one, just kingdom through His heavenly and earthly representatives can only be fulfilled by His ongoing personal presence and power. That, and the continuation of the spiritual war, is exactly what He promised through His prophets. The scene was set for the next stage of God's plan by allowing a remnant of His people to survive.

The kingdom of God, now and not yet

⁹“This, then, is how you should pray: “ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10)

Jesus came to teach His followers how to believe, manifested in the way they prayed and lived. This is part of how God's kingdom would come on earth, step by step, wherever His will is done. Until then, neither the prophets of old, the angels, nor the rulers of this world knew in detail how it would come about.⁵⁵ Otherwise, it would have been prevented from happening.

One thing was clear: Human beings were created by God in His image as free moral agents. They were given the task to represent Him in reigning over the earth but failed miserably with deadly consequences. Therefore, the new covenant necessarily had to be initiated and

⁵¹ Heiser, Michael S.. *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, chapter 24-25, Lexham Press. Kindle Edition.

⁵² Joshua 11:21-23. In 1 Samuel 17: 4 the height of one giant is given as roughly 6 feet 6 inches according to the correct Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint reading. See Daniel J. Hays, “The Height of Goliath: A Response to Clyde Billington,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50.3 (2007): 509– 16. Archaeological evidence has shown that in those days people were generally smaller than today, around five feet. Victor Matthews, *Manners and Customs in the Bible*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 3.

⁵³ Judges 1:27-36; 2:2-3, Genesis 17: 1– 2, 8– 10; 22: 15– 18, Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 4: 25– 27, 39– 40; 11: 18– 24

⁵⁴ Exodus 26:30, Isaiah 40:22; 66:1

⁵⁵ 1 Peter 1:12, 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, For example: 'Messiah' (mashiach in Hebrew, christos in Greek, Christ in English) means 'anointed'. It is used over 36 times in the Old Testament, of good and bad kings. The term is only used a few times with reference to a deliverer in the distant future. No single verse in the Old Testament describes the messiah as dying and rising, not even Isaiah 53 where the word does not occur. However, it is one piece of a much larger whole, deliberately kept separate to obscure the big picture. It was only meant to be understood through revelation after the resurrection. That is why Peter who believed Jesus was the messiah, tried to stop him from dying (Matthew 16:15-23). Moreover, after the resurrection his disciples needed a supernatural encounter to understand that the messiah had to suffer for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:44-45).

empowered by God Himself but at the same time include the participation and final victory of His representatives, the divine council, and human beings.⁵⁶

A pattern of how God works in the old covenant emerges to an attentive reader of the Old Testament. Adam, Moses, Israel, the kings of David's line, and the ultimate Messiah had a number of things in common. All were called, *son of God* and *servant*. They were to govern as God's representatives, experienced sin related suffering and death in the process, yet lived on with God and through their descendants.⁵⁷

The major difference is found in the identity of the perfect Messiah. There is a clear indication from the Old Testament that He was truly divine, God incarnate, becoming a man as enforced by the New Testament teaching. Daniel 7:13-14 describes two different characters. One looks like a son of man, a human. He is coming on the clouds to God, the Ancient of Days⁵⁸. Then the son of man received dominion, glory, and kingship so the whole world would serve Him forever.

God is described as the only one who *rides through the heavens* in several places of the Old Testament!⁵⁹ Jesus Christ quotes Daniel 7:13 and applies the *son of man* passage in it to Himself. At that time He will not ride meekly on a donkey as He did when entering Jerusalem shortly before He died and was resurrected, but in power on a horse at His second coming.⁶⁰

The different stages of the account about Jesus recorded in the New Testament are a reflection of God's story with the nations and Israel. This time, however, the unique⁶¹ Son of God succeeded where the nations and Israel, God's son, failed:⁶²

⁵⁶ Jeremiah 31:33, Daniel 7:14,18,22,27, 'holy ones' refers to both, members of God's divine council (Psalm 89:5-7) and followers of Jesus (Revelation 2:26, 3:21). Zechariah 14:1-5, Isaiah 24:21-23, Psalm 82:6-8.

⁵⁷ Adam: Luke 3:23-38, Genesis 2:15, One Hebrew lemma for Adam's activity is 'abad (consonants: 'bd = servant). Moses: Romans 4: 11– 12, 16; Galatians 3: 7, 23– 29; Exodus 14: 31; Numbers 12: 7; Deuteronomy 34: 5; Joshua 8: 31; Numbers 20: 1– 12; Deuteronomy 1: 37; 34: 4– 6, Matthew 17:1-4, Israel: Exodus 4:23, Hosea 11:1, Isaiah 2:6-8; 41:8-9; 42:6; 44:1-2,21; 45:4; 49:3; Jeremiah 13:10, Deuteronomy 15:6, 26:19, 28:1, Romans 4:13, Psalm 22:28, Zechariah 9:9-10, Psalm 89:27, Ezekiel 37. Kings of David's line: Psalm 2:2,7; 89:27, Genesis 49:10, 2 Samuel 3:18; 7: 5, 8, Psalm 89: 3. Ultimate Messiah: Deuteronomy 18: 15; cf. Acts 3: 22; 7: 37, Isaiah 11: 1; 49: 5 [cf. 49: 3], Jeremiah 23: 5; 33:15, Zechariah 3: 8; 6: 12, Isaiah 53:1– 11.

⁵⁸ See Ezekiel 1 where the throne description is identical and matches the one of God.

⁵⁹ Deuteronomy 33:26, Psalm 68:32-33; 104:1-4, Isaiah 19:1. Old Testament Jews were familiar with the Ancient Near East belief that the god Baal rides through the heavens. These passages were a clear rebuke to his followers. See Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, 2nd ed. (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; Leiden; Boston; Cologne; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 703– 05.

⁶⁰ John 12:12-19, Revelation 19:11-21. In the cultural context of the first century AD donkeys were used by the poor and horses by the powerful and mighty.

⁶¹ *monogenis* in John 3:16 means *one and only*.

⁶² Jesus' baptism (crossing of the Red Sea), temptation in the desert, (desert journey) casting out demons (repossessing the nations), choosing 12 disciples, (12 tribes of Israel) sending out 70 disciples (nations were given up to rule by 70 lesser gods), Jesus building his church on a rock, with the 'gates of hell' being unable to prevail against it (his declaration and transfiguration took place on Mount Hermon in Caesarea Philippi, known as the area of Bashan, the centre of the realm of the dead in Old Testament times, Psalm 68:15-23. It was the place where, according to Jewish literature, God's sons launched their rebellion against God in Genesis 6:1-4. Jesus makes clear his intentions there to conquer the demonic stronghold, to take back the nations. This action was associated to God in Psalm 68:18 but carried out by Jesus in Ephesians 4:8-10. A similar deliberate blurring is noted between Jesus and the Holy Spirit in Matthew 3:16, Acts 16:6-7, Romans 8:9-10, Philippians 1:19, Galatians 4:4-6, 1 Peter 1:10-11. The demons of Bashan were witnessing their downfall at the cross when

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. (1 John 3:8)

We live in the time before the second coming of Jesus. The Old Testament describes it as when disinherited nations, exploited by their corrupt heavenly and earthly rulers, will hear the declaration of God's glory through the Gospel. Many will answer the call before the day of judgement and come back into God's family. They will follow the true God by turning from their selfish ways and belief in Jesus, His ultimate Messiah.⁶³

God's perfect justice requires death as punishment for our sins. His perfect love wants to grant us forgiveness. Both of His attributes were met in Jesus Christ. Through His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection, He broke the curse of sin, took away the authority of Satan and prepared the way for living life to the full. It starts now as a dim reflection of what is to come in eternity. Will you accept or reject it?

To cross over—what practical difference does it make?

To those who have been crossing over (*Arabic Uboor*) to the other side and accepted the gospel: Congratulations! Your potential is greater than the world's problems. No government, no institution, and no religion can solve them but you as followers of Jesus. Begin by seeing clearly who you are:

Imagers, made by God to represent Him in every situation of your daily life, along with His divine council, the other unseen part of His family. Together with God you are to advance His kingdom by releasing the lost from the lies their spiritual human and non-human gods have told them. Do this by living and sharing the gospel of the cross in the context of a biblical worldview.

You are to win their hearts and minds through sacrifice like those of the early disciples of Jesus. They were really *believing* that this world was not their home. They lived and died accordingly. Within a few years they changed the then known world, according to Acts 17:6. Take risks and let God guide you, being absolutely certain that what you do is part of God's larger and invisible plan. Through you He is showing it to one person at the time. The greatest test of love is self-sacrifice, to die for someone else. Jesus did that for us while we were yet sinners, according to Romans 5.

Think of people or groups that are focused and single-minded. Athletes, people in love, soldiers in war, business men, terrorists. Learn from them, according to Luke 16:1-9. Their every thought is to advance their agenda and their last thought every night is what to do the next day to forward their dream. It never goes away, never changes, and their hearts are always full of it. All other interests are secondary.

Let the love of God shown in Christ be your motivating factor for advancing the kingdom of God. Engage in spiritual warfare around you by keeping this vision alive and by giving yourself totally to it: Believe in the reality of life after death with God. Be convinced He will use any of your daily work that honours Him, no matter how small, to bring about His goal. If

Jesus prayed Psalm 22:12. See also Amos 4:1-2 compared with Psalm 82:3-4. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For more details see: Heiser, Michael S.. *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (chapters 32-37). Lexham Press. Kindle Edition.

⁶³ Isaiah 66:16-23 compared with Romans 15:24,28: Spain was named Tarshish in Old Testament times. Acts 1:8 compared with Genesis 11:8.

