



Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Today we are going to look at Paul's expectations for his churches in his middle letters.

The middle letters are: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

As we begin this series, as is often the case, I have to work around in them with a few preliminary studies before I officially begin the booklets.

Same is true this time. I am not sure of a few things and need to get fully into them to pave the way for the hard research and careful presentation for the Mastering the Scriptures series.

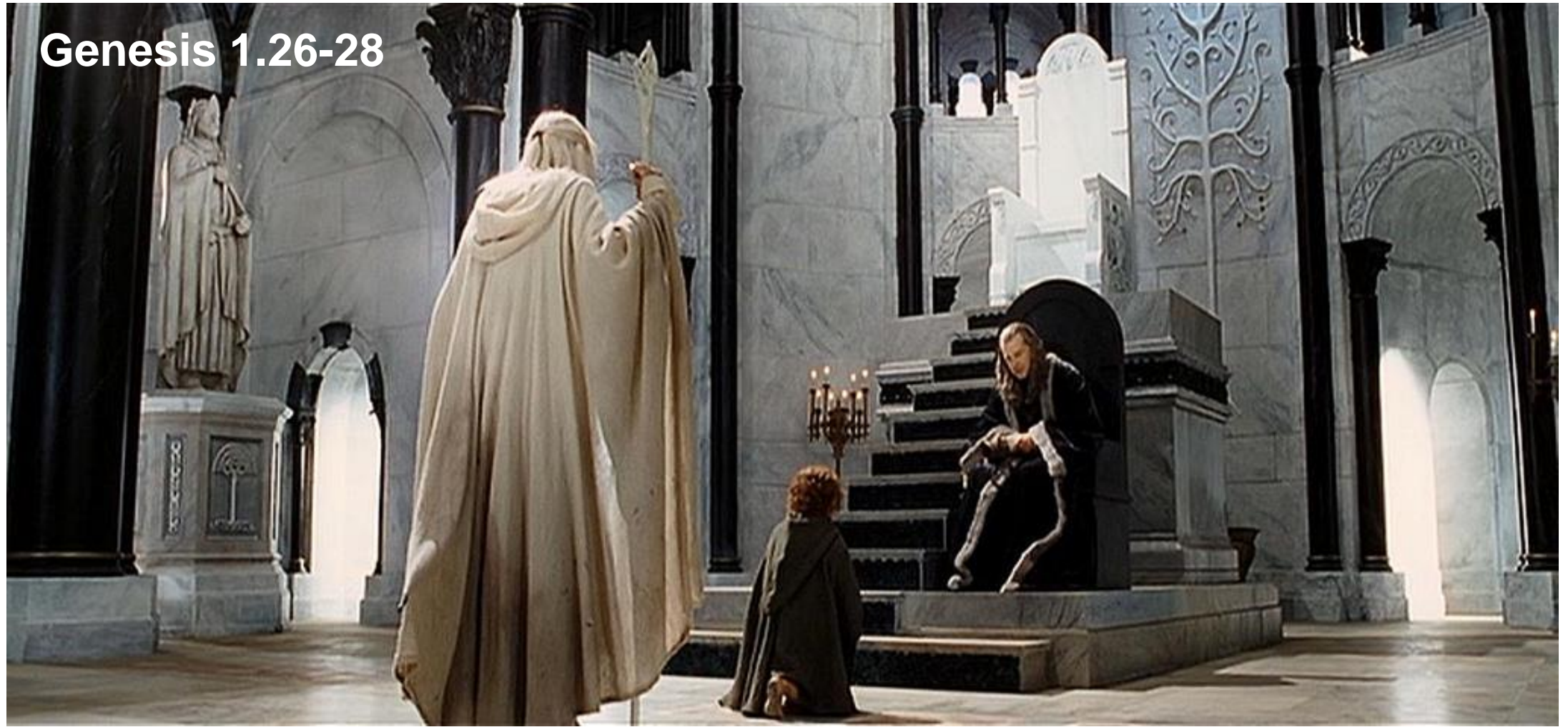


Why “the Cosmic Perspective?”



Genesis 1.31

Genesis 1.26-28





Genesis ch. 3, Ro 1.22

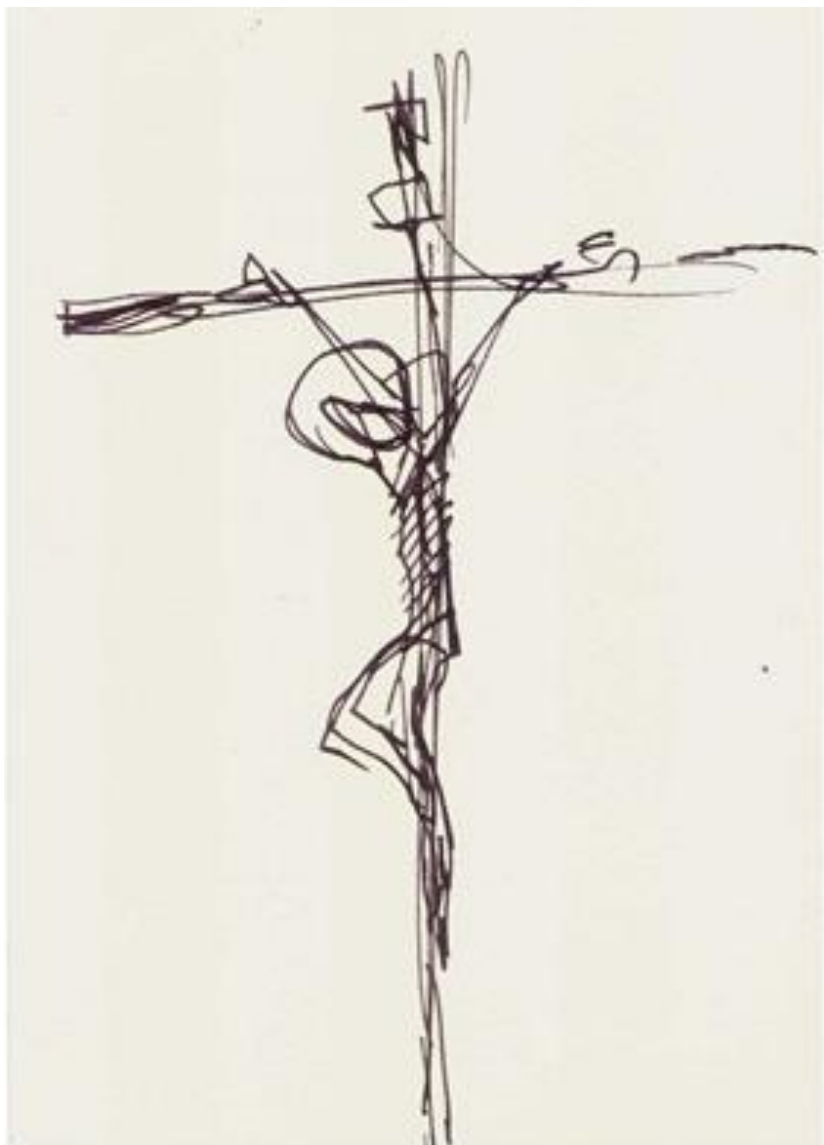


Ge 2.16-17, Ro 5.12

Ge 3. 17-19, Ro 8.18-24a









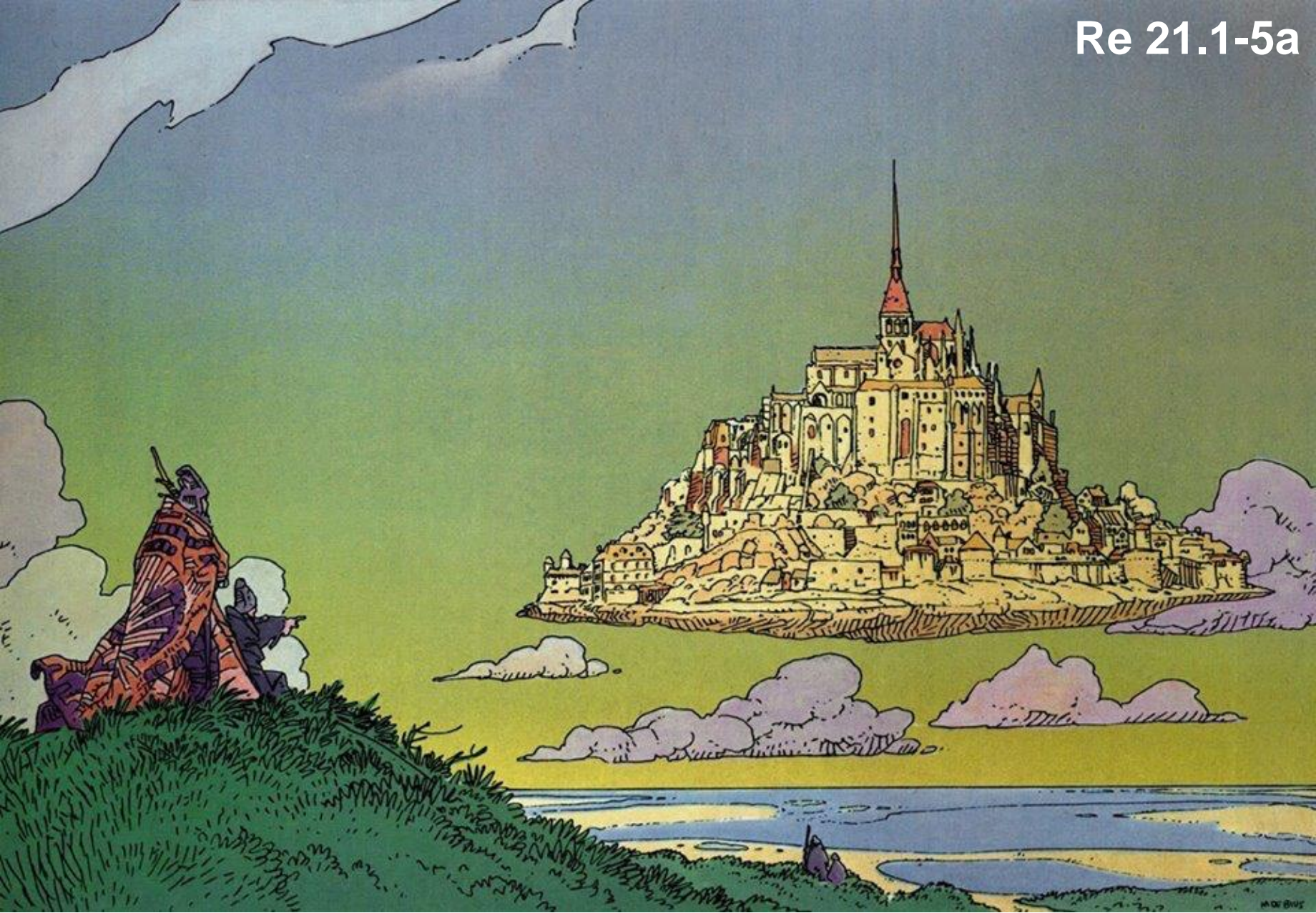




2 Co 5.17



Re 21.1-5a



Hb 2.14: “For as the waters fill the sea, the earth will be filled with an awareness of the glory of the LORD.”





Discuss (Ep 3.4-11; Mk 1.14-15)

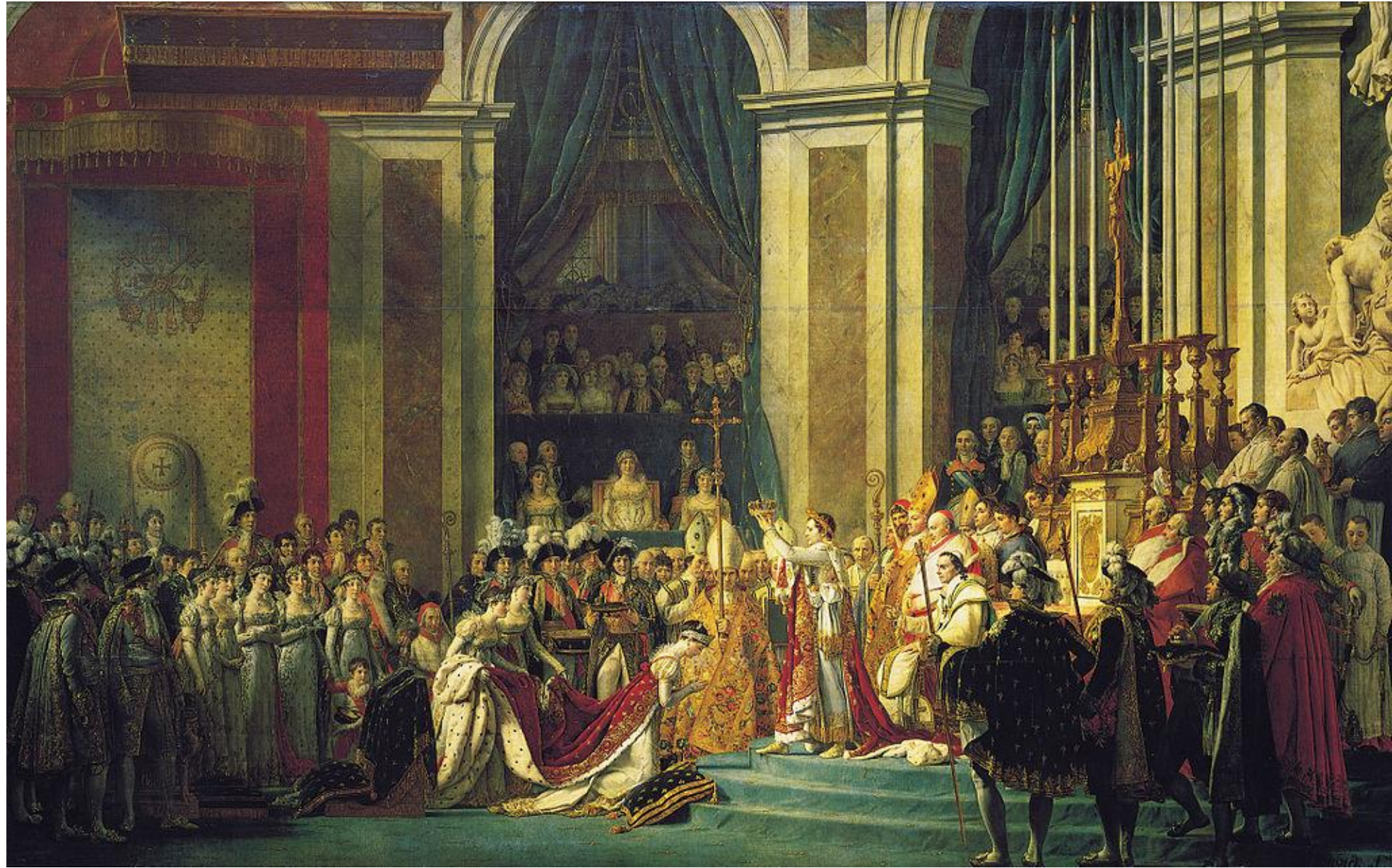
- If the church functions as God intends, what is the result of that?
- How would the church make God's manifold wisdom known?
- What does this have to do with the kingdom of God arriving?
- What does that even mean, anyway?

The Story, session 6: “The Kingdom Arrives”

- Jesus announces “the good news”
- Not the “going to heaven”
- Not the standard “soterian” gospel
- It’s the kingdom-of-God gospel ...
- Mk 1.14-15: “Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. And he said, ‘The time is fulfilled! God’s kingdom is arriving! Repent, and believe the good news!’”

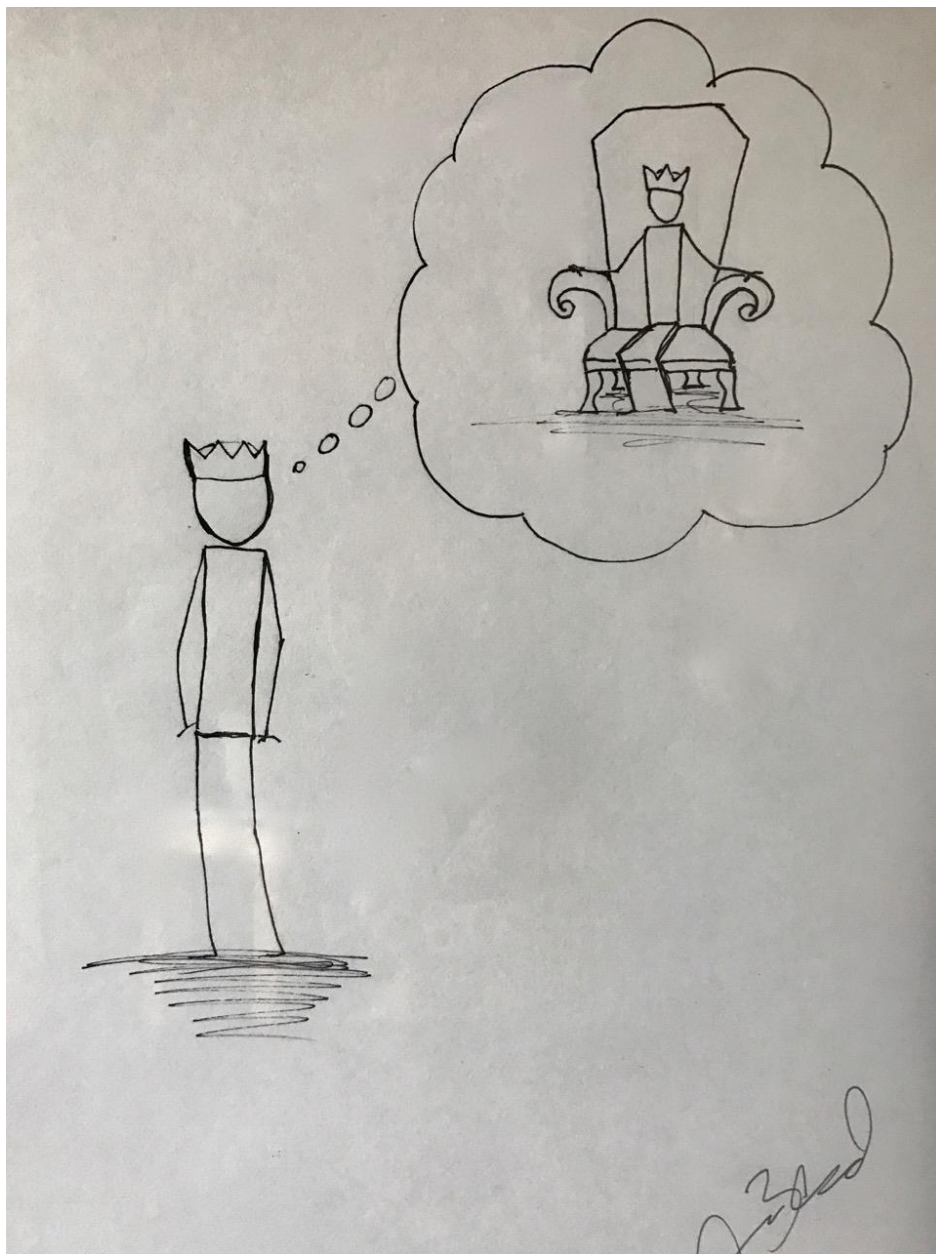


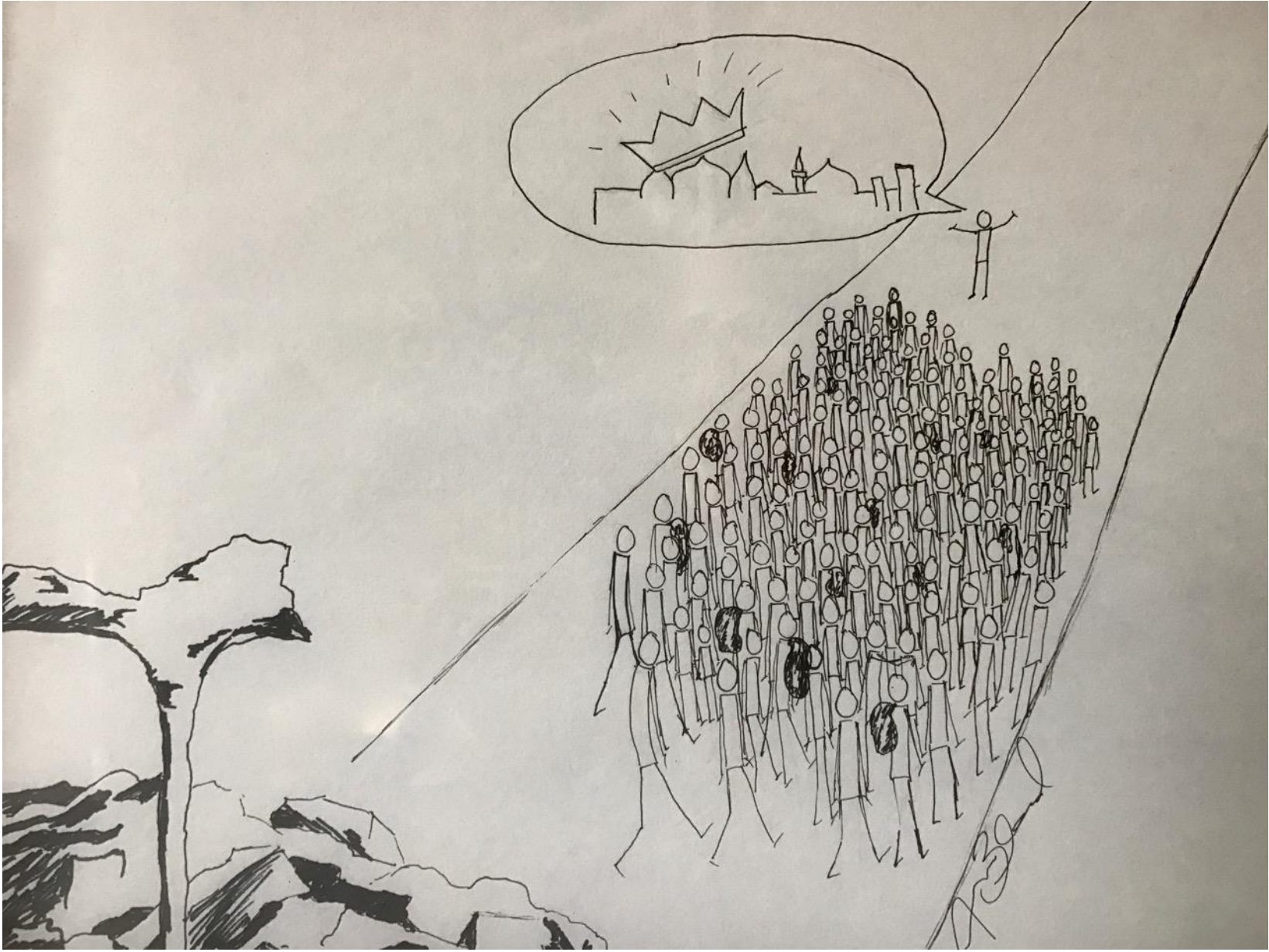


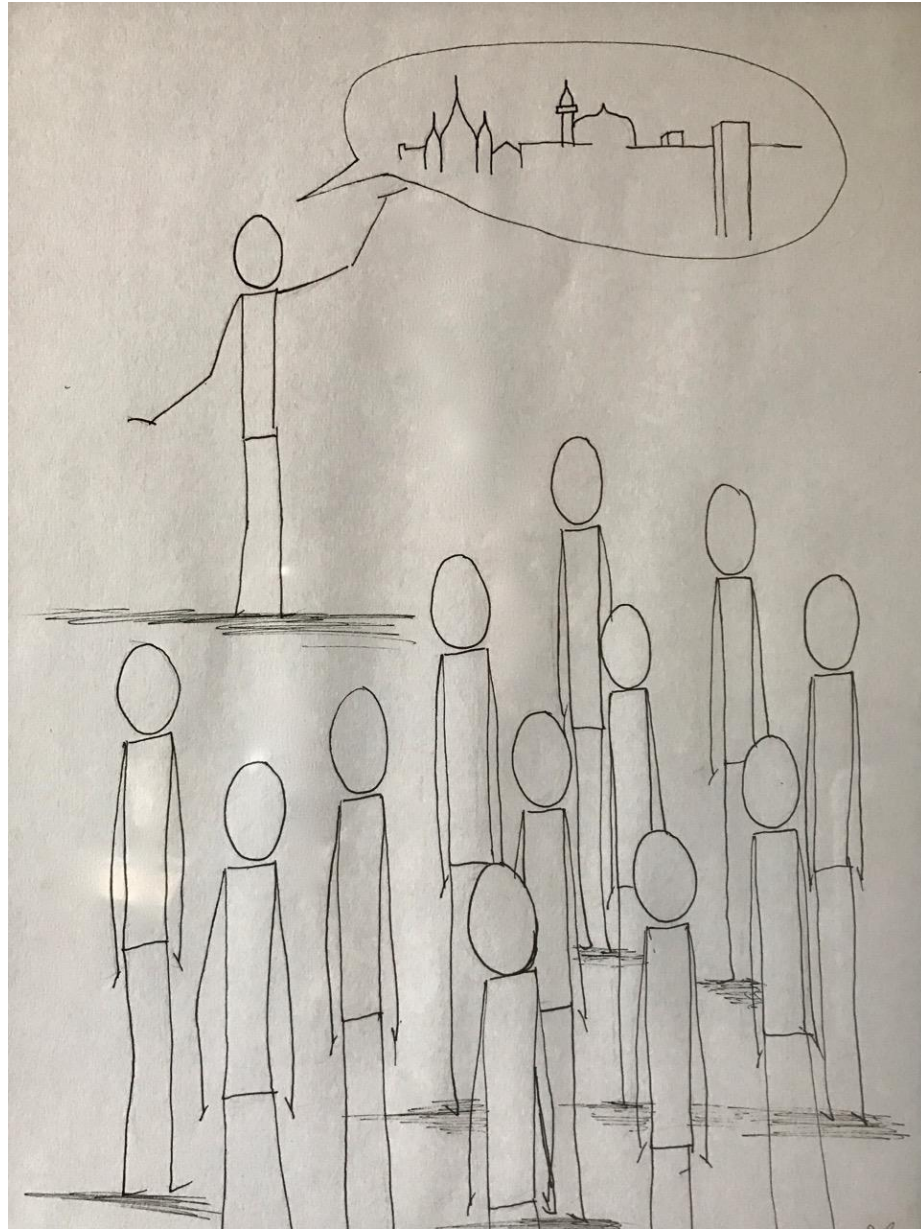


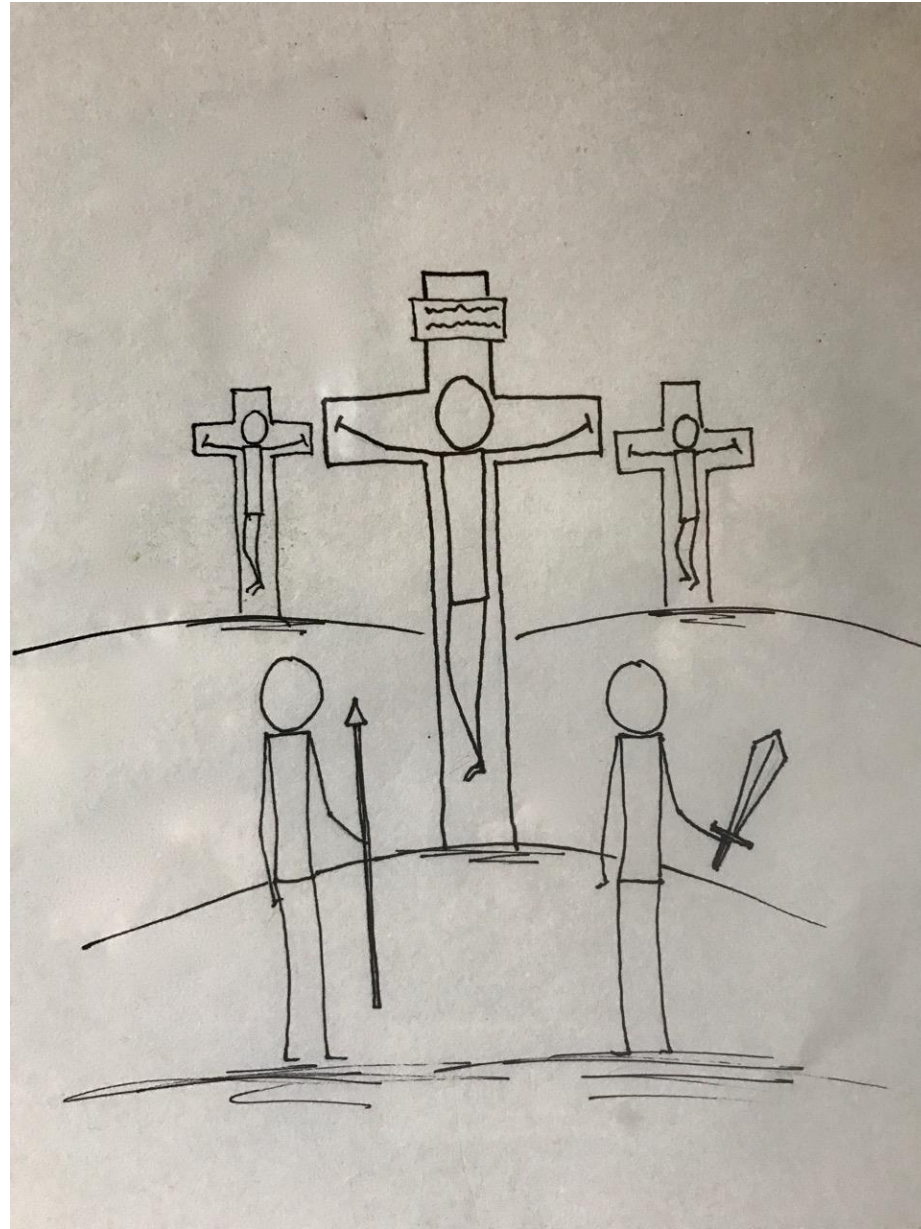
PAUL
AND THE
FAITHFULNESS OF GOD
N.T. WRIGHT

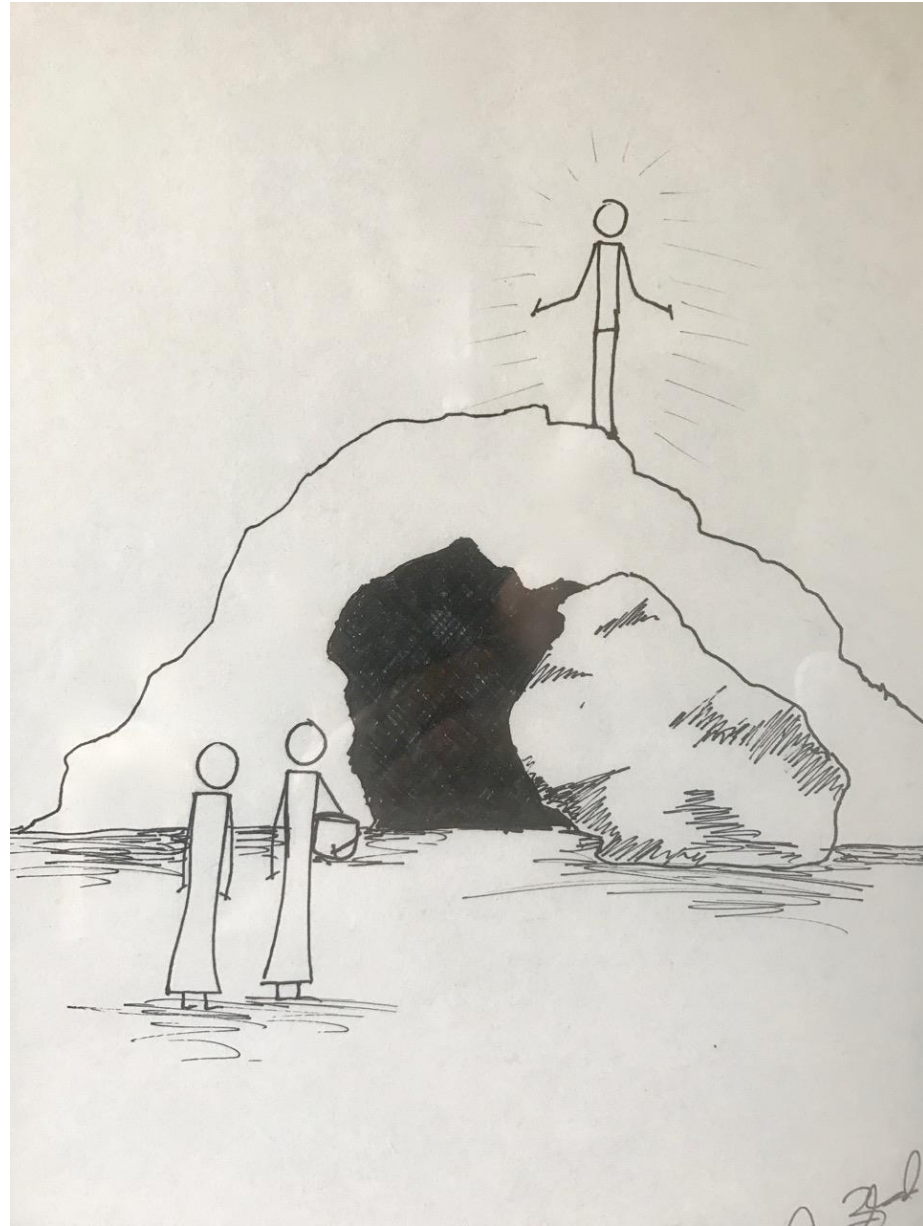


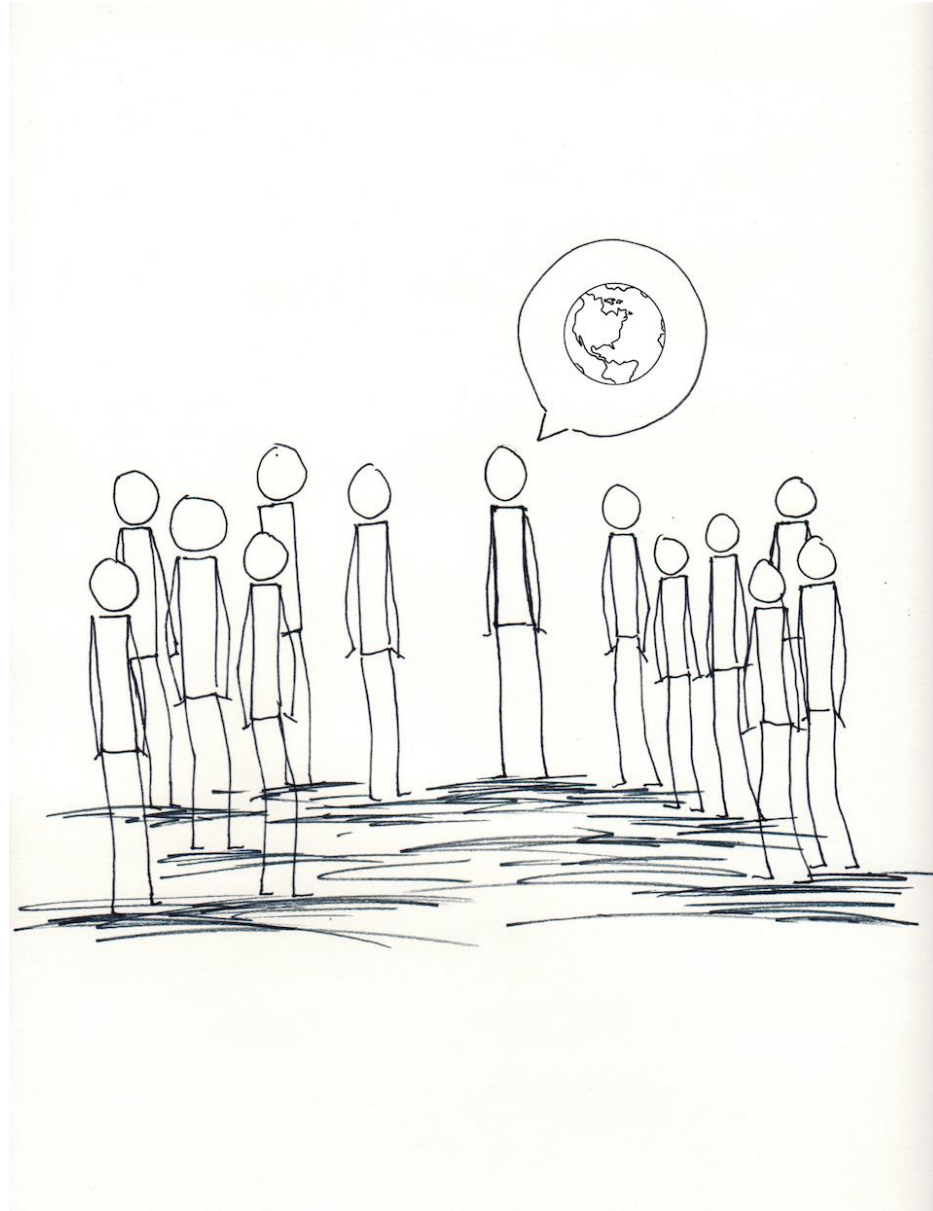












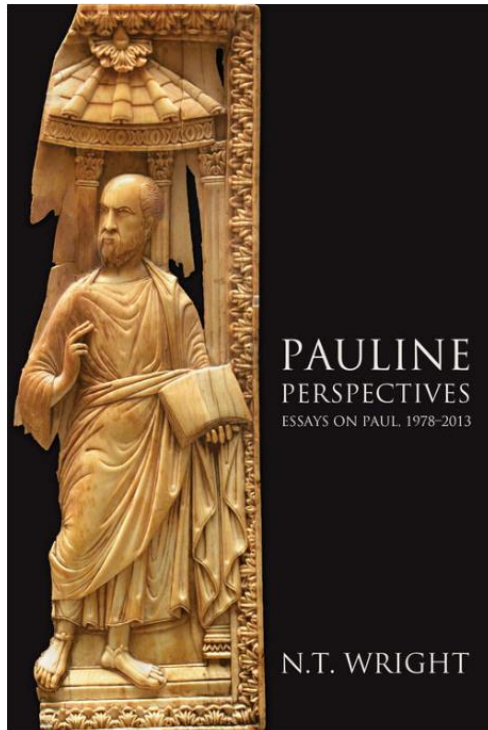


It was always clear that God's future would include Gentiles

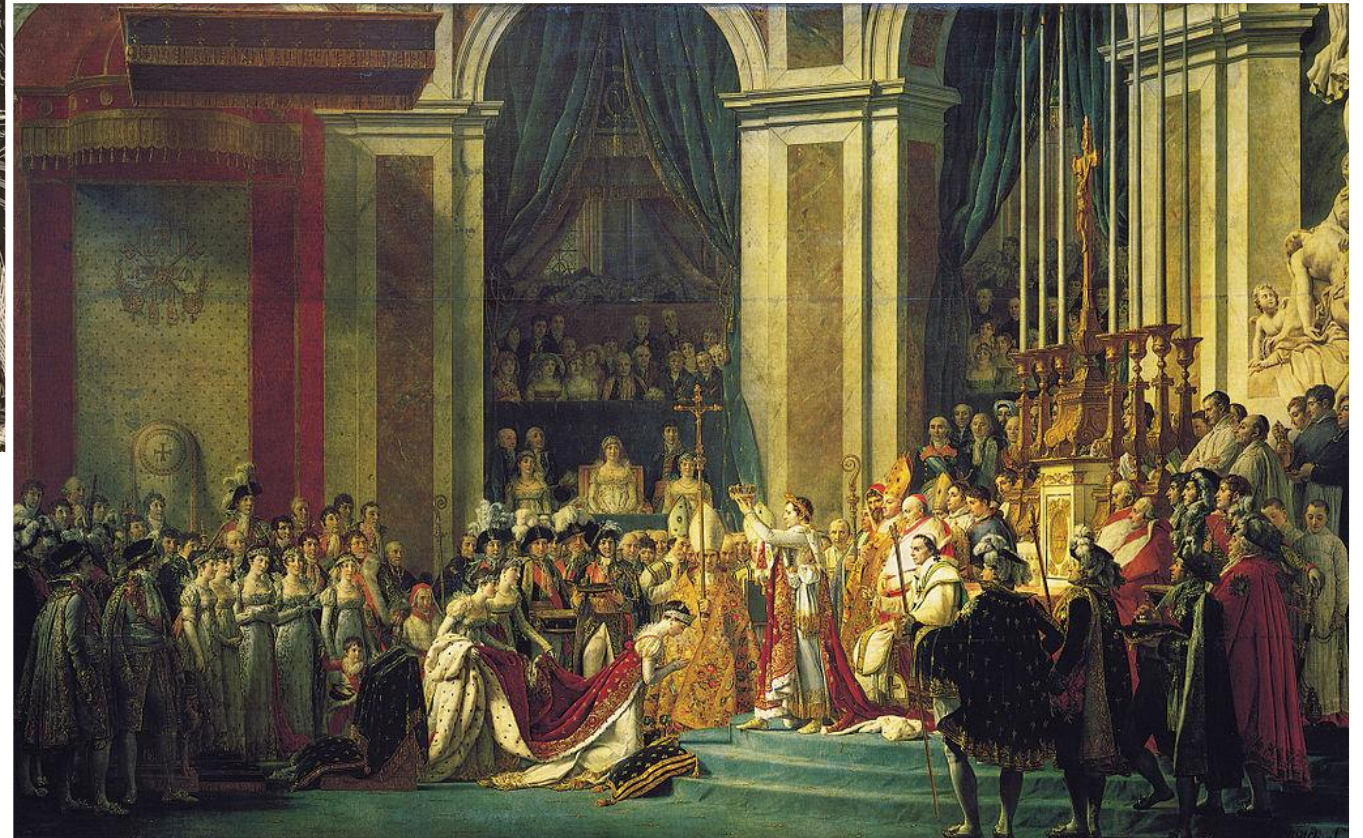
- But what would that look like? Gentile worshipping? Gentile annihilation?
- It looked totally unexpected

Ep 3.4-6: “As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets. And this is God’s plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God’s children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.”

This has always been the plan!



“The long story of Israel, of Abraham and his family, has found its goal, its telos, at last.” N.T. Wright, Pauline Perspectives, 412



Through its life, God's reign is visible

- We read Ep 3.4-6; let's keep reading

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Ep 3.7-11: “By God’s grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News. Though I am the least deserving of all God’s people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. I was chosen to explain to everyone the administration of the mystery that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning. This is so God’s wisdom, in its rich variety, may now be made known through the church to the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What does life under God's reign look like?

- Ep 4.3-6: “Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.”

Paul's Expectations of His Churches Reflected in the Middle Letters

Paul had 3 main expectations of his churches reflected in his middle letters:

1. They mature in Christ, as churches in Ephesus, Philippi, and the Colossae tri-city area, and that they carry out the work of the ministry in their area.
2. They participate with him with one mind, striving together for the progress of the gospel as individual churches, as a growing network of churches, and as key leaders serving the network.
3. That together—as churches and a growing network, right down to each individual—they become one mature church reflecting the image of Christ.

