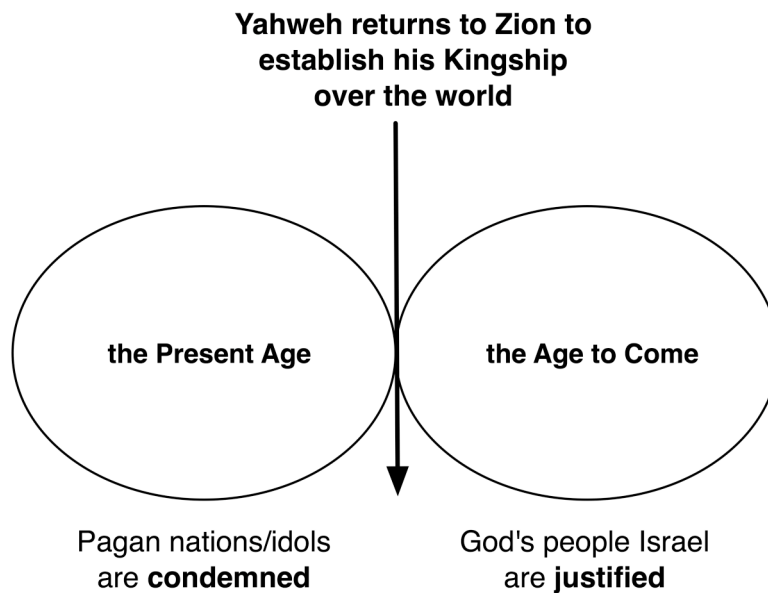


Handouts

From N T Wright, *New Testament and the People of God* (243).

- (1) **Who are we?** We are Israel, the chosen people of the creator god.
- (2) **Where are we?** We are in the holy Land, focused on the Temple; but, paradoxically, we are still in exile.
- (3) **What's wrong?** We have the wrong rulers: pagans on the one hand, compromised Jews on the other, or, half-way between, Herod and his family. We are all involved in a less-than-ideal situation.
- (4) **What's the solution?** Our God must act again to give us the true sort of rule, that is, his own kingship exercised through properly appointed officials (a true priesthood; possibly a true king); and in the mean time Israel must be faithful to his covenant character.
- (5) **What time is it?** It is still the Present Age. It is still an age of God's wrath.

We can diagram this Jewish timeline and expectation as follows:



The Gospel in Paul's/Wright's thinking

The following statements from Tom Wright's *What Saint Paul Really Said* (60) help us understand how the apostle Paul rethought his understanding of God and the Gospel in the light of the risen Christ without abandoning the essential Jewish worldview:

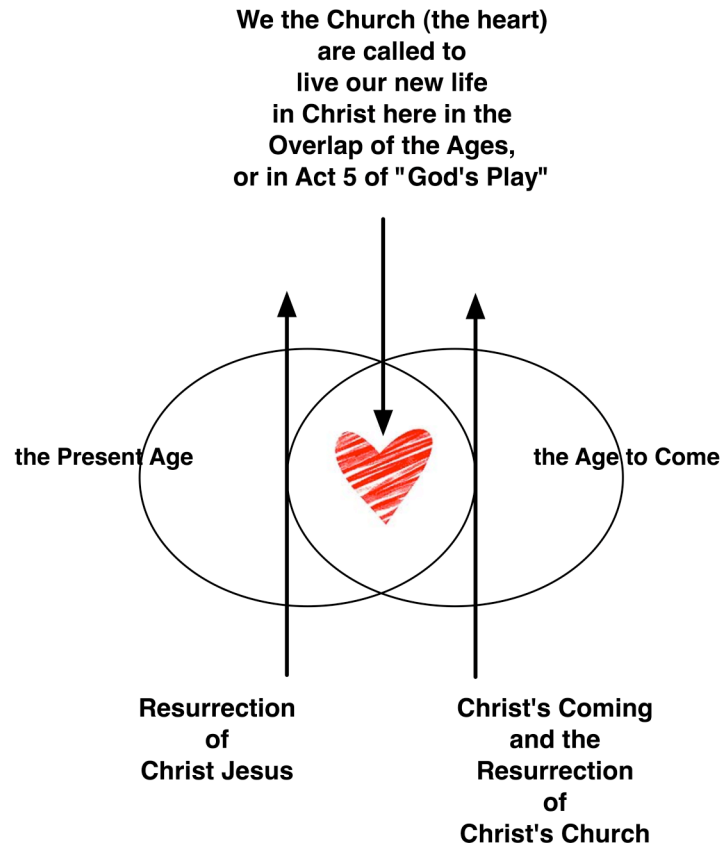
1. The Gospel is a Twofold Announcement about God:
 - A. The God of Israel is the one true God, and the pagan deities are mere idols. [That is OT monotheism in a nutshell]
 - B. The God of Israel is now made known in and through Jesus himself.

2. The Gospel is a Fourfold Announcement about Jesus:
 - A. In Jesus of Nazareth, specifically in his cross, the decisive victory has been won over all the powers of evil, including sin and death themselves.
 - B. In Jesus' resurrection the New Age has dawned, inaugurating the long-awaited time when the prophecies would be fulfilled, when Israel's exile would be over, and the whole world would be addressed by the one creator God.
 - C. The crucified and risen Jesus was, all along, Israel's Messiah, her representative king.
 - D. Jesus was therefore also the Lord, the true King of the world, the one at whose name every knee would bow.

The following is how Paul re-formulated the biblical worldview in light of King Jesus. This is taken from Tom Wright's *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (275):

- (1) Who are we?** We are “in the Messiah”, identified solely by our confession and faith in him as the risen lord; we are the new-covenant people, the Torah-fulfilling people, the worldwide family promised to Abraham by the one true God.
- (2) Where are we?** In the good creation of the good God; creation is still groaning in travail, awaiting its own liberation from decay, but is already under the lordship of the risen and ascended Messiah.
- (3) What's wrong?** The world, and we ourselves, are not yet redeemed as we shall be. Most people in the world, pagans and Jews alike, remain ignorant of what Israel's God has done in Jesus the Messiah. In particular, the present world rulers (Caesar and the rest, and the dark 'spiritual' powers that stand behind them) are at best a parody, and at worst a monstrous and blasphemous distortion, of the true justice and peace the one God intends for his world. Because sin still has idolatrous humankind in its grip, death still acts as a tyrant.
- (4) What's the solution?** In the long term, the creator's great act of new creation, through which the cosmos itself will be liberated, true justice and peace will triumph over all enemies, all the righteous will be raised from the dead, and believers alive at the time will be transformed. In the short term, the gospel must be announced to the world, doing its own powerful work of challenging, transforming, healing and rescuing, and thus creating “resurrection” people in the metaphorical sense.
- (5) What time is it?** The “age to come” has been inaugurated, but the “present age” still continues. We live between resurrection and resurrection, that of Jesus and that of ourselves; between the victory over death at Easter and the final victory when Jesus “appears” again. This now/not yet tension runs right through Paul's vision of the Christian life, undergirding his view of (for instance) suffering and prayer.

This diagram attempts to show Paul's re-thinking of the biblical worldview in light of the death and resurrection of King Jesus:



Some Scripture References (English Standard Version)

1 Corinthians 1:13-14:

11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. **12** What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." **13** Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

1 Corinthians 15:20-28—

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. **21** For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. **22** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. **23** But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. **24** Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. **25** For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. **26** The last enemy to be destroyed is death. **27** For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. **28** When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. (See also Rom 8:11, 23; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; etc.)

Romans 15:8-13:

8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, **9** and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.” [2 Sam 22:50; Ps 18:49]

10 And again it is said,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” [Deut 32:43]

11 And again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.” [Ps 117:1]

12 And again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.” [Is 11:10]

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Ephesians 2:11-22:

11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— **12** remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off [i.e., you Gentiles] have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For he himself is our peace, who has made us both [Jews and Gentiles] one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility **15** by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, **16** and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. **17** And he came and preached peace to you who were far off [you Gentiles] and peace to those who were near [we Jews]. **18** For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. **19** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, **21** in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. **22** In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Ezekiel 36:24-28—

24 I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. **25** I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. **26** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. **28** You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Jeremiah 31:31-32—

31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, **32** not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. **33** But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

Ephesians 6:1-23

6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? **3** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6** We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. **7** For one who has died has been set free from sin. **8** Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. **9** We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. **10** For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. **11** So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. **13** Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. **14** For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! **16** Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? **17** But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, **18** and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. **19** I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

20 When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. **21** But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. **22** But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. **23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Five-Act Play in which we live in our scene today

(Tom Wright's framework as formulated by David Suryk)

Act 1 (Creation) is God's creation of the world and the first human beings. God places Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, a complete paradise, where they are tested to see if they freely will love, trust and obey God.

Act 2 (Fall) tells how Adam and Eve failed to love God and how, after clothing their nakedness with animal skins, God expelled them to work with great difficulty the ground where Adam had been created. This is the first Exile of human beings from the Land.

Act 3 (Israel) tells of the beginning of God's redemption of the world through his call of

Abraham. Scenes in Act 3 include the enslavement of Abraham's descendants in Egypt, the Exodus, the giving of the Law (they repeat the sin of Adam with the business about the Golden Calf!), then the Wilderness Wanderings, and finally Israel came into the Promised Land.

But later scenes in Act 3 show how Israel turned away from loving God and neighbor, repeating the sin of Adam yet again. We learn how God sent prophet after prophet calling them back to Covenant faithfulness, or else he would send them into Exile. We learn how they remain unrepentant, and so God sent into Exile to pagan nations (which he calls "his servants"), according to God's faithfulness to his Covenant!

A new scene shows God's love for his Exiled Israel and he returns them to the Land. But Act 3 ends with Israel still under pagan domination—this time it's the Roman Empire. See Nehemiah 9 for this sad irony: the remnant Israel is back in the Land but the wealth of their nation is flowing out to the pagan kings over them, rather than the wealth of the nations flowing into Jerusalem.

Act 4 (Jesus) begins with Israel still in some sense in Exile, that is, still waiting for the promises God by his prophets to be fulfilled. Enters first is John the Baptist and then Jesus. At his baptism, Jesus received the Spirit of kingship. Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament Law and so became the climax of the Law. He gathered a small new group of faithful Israelites to form a New Covenant Community. In his death he abolished the law of commandments and ordinances. In his resurrection and the giving of his Spirit, Act 5 quickly begins. New Creation has begun even as the Present Age continues.

Act 5 (the Church), Scene 1 is about the early Church, God's New Humanity in Christ, going out from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, bringing with them the new life of Christ and the call to make disciples of all nations. A dominant issue in Act 5, Scene 1 was the working out of the Jewish-Gentile issues as the Church is revealed to be the One New Humanity, living not under Law but rather under Grace, not obeying the flesh but rather obeying the Spirit. God used Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, to reveal God's mystery of the One Jewish-plus-Gentile New Humanity in Christ.

We are even given glimpses of the Final Scene of Act 5 when Christ returns and God raises from the dead all who belong to Christ. In between the First and Final Scenes of Act 5 we are called to live as the New Humanity of Christ in all that we do. We are to make disciples of all nations. We are to press the lordship of Christ into all areas of life, private and public. We are to love God and one another. We are to live in such ways as to be a foretaste of the coming kingdom. And so we live and pray to the Father, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

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***Great website with a collection of Tom Wright's stuff online** for reading, listening, downloading, etc. www.ntwrightpage.com

A pdf of this talk and some further accompanying handouts are at <http://www.gfmuiuc.net/paulinediscipleship>