

Paul – Crucifying Our Flesh

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Paul and Roman Context

Our favorite guy in the Bible—our favorite books in the Bible. At least we have a lot of friends whose Paul is their favorite author of the Bible, and they always talk about Paul to us and why we're always wrong about everything we believe because of what Paul said. And so I wanted to begin learning about Paul, and what was Paul's agenda, and the things that he was saying, and who was he writing to.

Last week we spoke about the Roman Empire. We spoke about a man by the name of Julius Caesar, right? And he was a huge influence on the Empire of Rome, the kingdom of Rome. He brought the people together in the midst of a lot of civil wars and conflict, and people initially deified him after his death. He did a lot of cool things. He even changed the calendar. The Roman calendar was actually originally based off the moon, the lunar cycles, and he was impressed by the Egyptian calendar, which is more or less based on the sun, right? About 365 and a quarter day calendar, and so he kind of switched the Roman calendar to make it more dependable, more reliable because the moon calendar left them in shambles.

Around the same time in Israel, they were having a lot of trouble too. Josephus writes in *Special Laws* 2, section 26 to 46, paragraph 140. In Colson's translation of Josephus, he speaks about how in the first century the Sanhedrin actually used a calculated calendar that they had schools set up of astronomy to calculate the months, the distance between each month. And so the calendar was a big issue everywhere, and when the Roman Empire shifted this, it really pleased the Romans and the people of the empire to exalt Julius Caesar.

After he died, he had a son named Augustus Caesar, or actually named Octavian, who changed his name to Augustus Caesar, and he became the son of God, and Rome pretty much deified him to unite the entire empire, this huge empire, under one influence, one social religious

influence of worshiping Rome and the emperor in one. And so we have Paul writing now to major cities where temples are set up to the emperor himself, worshiping the empire of Rome through a man, the emperor, Caesar.

And what's he saying in these letters? He's talking about Caesar calling himself the son of God. Caesar calls himself the savior of Rome, the man who brought the gospel the day he was born, peace on earth. And Paul's writing these guys and saying, "Listen, guys, he's not the savior. I know the savior. Yeshua is the savior. He's the son of God, right? He brings the gospel, the good news." And so it's really exciting to see what Paul is writing.

The Cross in Paul's Message

And so I wanted to continue that this week with the idea of crucifying our flesh. Paul loves talking about the cross. You guys know that? Right? In Hebrew Roots or Messianic movement, we don't like to talk about the cross for some reason—whether we got offended in church or for whatever reason. "Oh, Tammuz cross, right? Because Tammuz, the sun deity, carried a cross around." That's not true. Tammuz was a vegetation deity. He never had anything to do with the sun. And the carvings that we do have, the images of Tammuz where he's holding a cross—if you look at the edges of the cross, that's not true. They're blooming. He's holding a branch that he's making bloom by holding it. You can also see the ones coming out of his back or behind him blooming. His sign was not a cross. It was vegetation, right?

But for some reason in Hebrew Roots and the Messianic movement, we're all caught up about the cross not being a very popular symbol for us. And fact is, guys, we have a lot of evidence that the believers before Constantine, before the first century of Rome, used the cross. We have Paul talking about the cross all the time. We have Paul talking about the crucifixion. "For I decided to concentrate only on Yeshua Messiah and his death on the cross." That's something Paul said. Paul, what about the calendar? Paul, what about kosher? Paul, what about circumcision? Paul, what about the name? No, no, no, no. I'm gonna concentrate only on the death of Yeshua and His crucifixion. I'm gonna concentrate on the cross. Why? We know Yeshua died, but why is he so caught up on the cross, right?

A little bit of information on the cross. I may need someone to go back there and check this. Where'd Moose go? See if you can click one of those slides. The cross was something that wasn't simply Roman. It was used throughout many, many different kingdoms. And there we go. Hopefully we're up now. Persians used it, right? Macedonians used it. Carthaginians used it. A lot of people used the crucifixion as a form of capital punishment.

Crucifixion as Capital Punishment

Now this wasn't just any capital punishment, right? If you deserved to die, you weren't automatically just sent to be crucified. Crucifixion was horrible. Now I know we've watched *The Passion of the Christ*, and it depicts the crucifixion as this horrible, horrible thing. Guys, that's not even scratching the surface of what happens when you are crucified, right? Crucifixion was used on people that the government wanted to make an example out of. They wanted to show their sheer force of the pain they could inflict on you if you do what the victim on the cross had done.

Not just nailed to it, not just whipped and beaten, not just humiliated, left up there to die, typically. Most nations didn't take you down. You get up there for two or three days as you slowly suffer and die. We're going to go over a few things that happen to your body during the crucifixion. And I know we've all seen the research where "Oh, you can't support your weight so you suffocate." It's more than that, right? Crucifixion was used to decree and show the power of whoever was doing the crucifying. Make sense?

Hanukkah and the Maccabees

Anyone know what this is? I know it's kind of blurry. So everybody's familiar. I love history. Can I talk about history? Can I talk about history that we don't like to talk about? Is that okay? All right. Everyone knows the story of Hanukkah, right? It was a great battle when the Seleucid Empire came down and Antiochus Epiphanes came into Israel and desecrated the temple, right? And he started making people eat ham and people didn't want to eat ham. So he started killing people for following Torah. And then this family called the Maccabees stood up and rallied an insurgency of Judeans to take on the Seleucid army, right? The Greeks. Everyone knows the story. And they ended up winning and rededicating the temple back. It's a wonderful story. It's awesome. I celebrate it every single year because I think it rocks, right?

The Hasmonean Dynasty

But the Maccabees were part of a family, a very powerful family known as the Hasmonean dynasty. Okay? Anyone ever heard of the Hasmoneans? Okay? After the Seleucids were kicked out, the Hasmonean dynasty took over as the rulers of Israel. Okay? And they began to become corrupt. I'll just say it like it is. Right? Power corrupts.

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