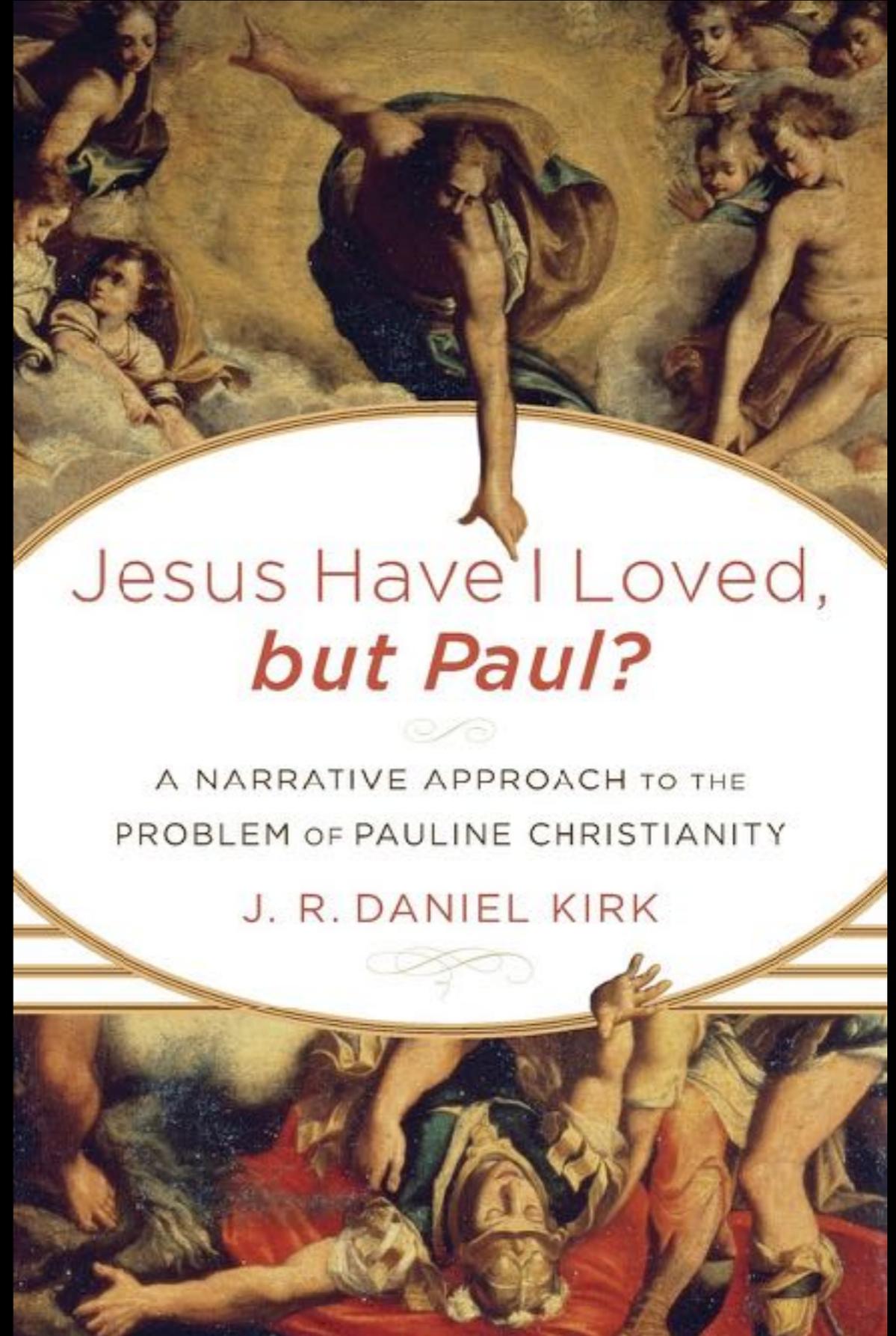


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Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes

PAUL
BEHAVING
Badly

WAS THE
APOSTLE
A RACIST,
CHAUVINIST
JERK?



Jesus Have I Loved,
but Paul?

A NARRATIVE APPROACH TO THE
PROBLEM OF PAULINE CHRISTIANITY

J. R. DANIEL KIRK

Romans 1:1-4

Paul, a servant of the Messiah Jesus, called to be an apostle who was set apart for God's good news, which he promised long ago through his prophets in the sacred Scriptures.

The good news is about his Son, whose physical lineage was from the line of David, and through the Holy Spirit he was established as the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus, the Messiah, our Lord!

Through him I was graciously made **his representative to call all the nations to faithful obedience** for the sake of his name, and that includes you who are in Rome, also called by Jesus the Messiah and loved by God.

Paul's Vision of "the church"

Paul believed the local church was the place where God's love and mercy through Jesus and the Spirit unifies people across all social and ethnic boundary lines, and transforms them into new kinds of humans who follow the teachings of Jesus and live as if he is the true king of the world.

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- (1) **unifies people** across all social and ethnic boundary lines,
- (2) **transforms them** into new kinds of humans who follow the teachings of Jesus and live as if he is the true king of the world.

Genesis 12:1-3

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;

**and all the families on earth
will be blessed through you**

Galatians 3:26-28

So in the Messiah Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were **baptized** into the Messiah have clothed yourselves with the Messiah. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for **you are all one** in Messiah Jesus. If you belong to Messiah, then **you all are Abraham's descendants**, and heirs according to the promise.

Paul made sure that the earliest Christian churches were made up of people from all over the social map. They formed a “fellowship of different,” full of people who certainly did not agree on very much, except perhaps that life in Roman cities was dirty and difficult. And **this was the heart of Paul’s mission, to create a fellowship of difference and different**, a mixture of people from all across the spectrum. He believed that the church is God’s world-changing social experiment of bringing different people to the same table to share life with one another as a new kind of family.

Scot McKnight, *A Fellowship of Differents*

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is **one loaf**, we, who are many, are **one body**, for we all share the **one loaf**.

Paul saw these early Christian rituals (Baptism & Communion) as creating a key social achievement: to bring together many people into one body and construct a new form of corporate solidarity. Both rituals symbolize and reinforce a worldview in which the death and resurrection of Jesus are the central events in a cosmic story. They give meaning to the world and at the same time embody the central theme of the early Christian society: **a communal solidarity in Christ that transcends all other socio-ethnic distinctions.**

David G. Horrell, *Solidarity & Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics*

Colossians 3:11

You all have put on the **new humanity**, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but the Messiah is all, and is in all.

Early Christianity served as a revitalization movement in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social bonds that were able to cope with many urgent urban problems. To cities filled with homeless and impoverished, the Christians offered charity and hope when no other social institutions existed to help the poor. To cities filled with strangers and newcomers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for social attachment. To cities filled with orphans and widows, the Christians offered a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by ethnic divisions, the Christians communities offered a new basis for social solidarity... It was not simply a new urban movement, but a new culture, capable of making life in Greco-Roman cities more tolerable.

Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure Jesus Movement Became a Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries.*