

INTRODUCTION TO IMPERIAL CULT



RESOURCES STUDIED

1. Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor by S. R. F. Price
2. Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: by Steven J. Friesen
3. Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens (First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman by Mr. Bruce W. Winter
4. Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities by Bruce Winter
5. After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change by Bruce Winter

The imperial cult

Another element in the Roman state religion was what is generally referred to as the imperial cult. This cult regarded emperors and members of their families as gods.

On his death, Julius Caesar was officially recognized as a god, the Divine ('Divus') Julius, by the Roman state. And in 29 BC Caesar's adopted son, the first Roman emperor Augustus, allowed the culturally Greek cities of Asia Minor to set up temples to him. This was really the first manifestation of Roman emperor-worship.

While worship of a living emperor was culturally acceptable in some parts of the empire, in Rome itself and in Italy it was not. There an emperor was usually declared a 'divus' only on his death, and was subsequently worshipped (especially on anniversaries, like that of his accession) with sacrifice like any other gods.



Emperor-worship was a unifying factor in the Roman world, practiced not only by army units spread throughout the empire but also by individuals in the provinces, where there were collective imperial cult centres at places such as Lyons (Gaul), Pergamon (Asia) and (probably) Colchester (Britain).

The imperial cult helped to focus the loyalty of provincials on the emperor at the centre of the empire, and in some regions (such as Gaul), there is evidence that Roman authorities took the initiative in setting it up, presumably for that very reason.

The image shown here is that of a sculpted relief from the base of the column of the emperor Antoninus Pius, probably to be dated to AD 161. It shows the apotheosis (transformation into gods) of Antoninus Pius and his wife Faustina.

They are shown by the portrait busts at the top of the frame, flanked by eagles - associated with imperial power and Jupiter - and were typically released during imperial funerals to represent the spirits of the deceased.

Antoninus and Faustina are being carried into the heavens by a winged, heroically nude figure. The armoured female figure on the right is the goddess Roma, a divine personification of Rome, and the reclining figure to the left - with the obelisk - is probably a personification of the Field of Mars in Rome, where imperial funerals took place.



MODERN EXAMPLE OF IMPERIAL CULT

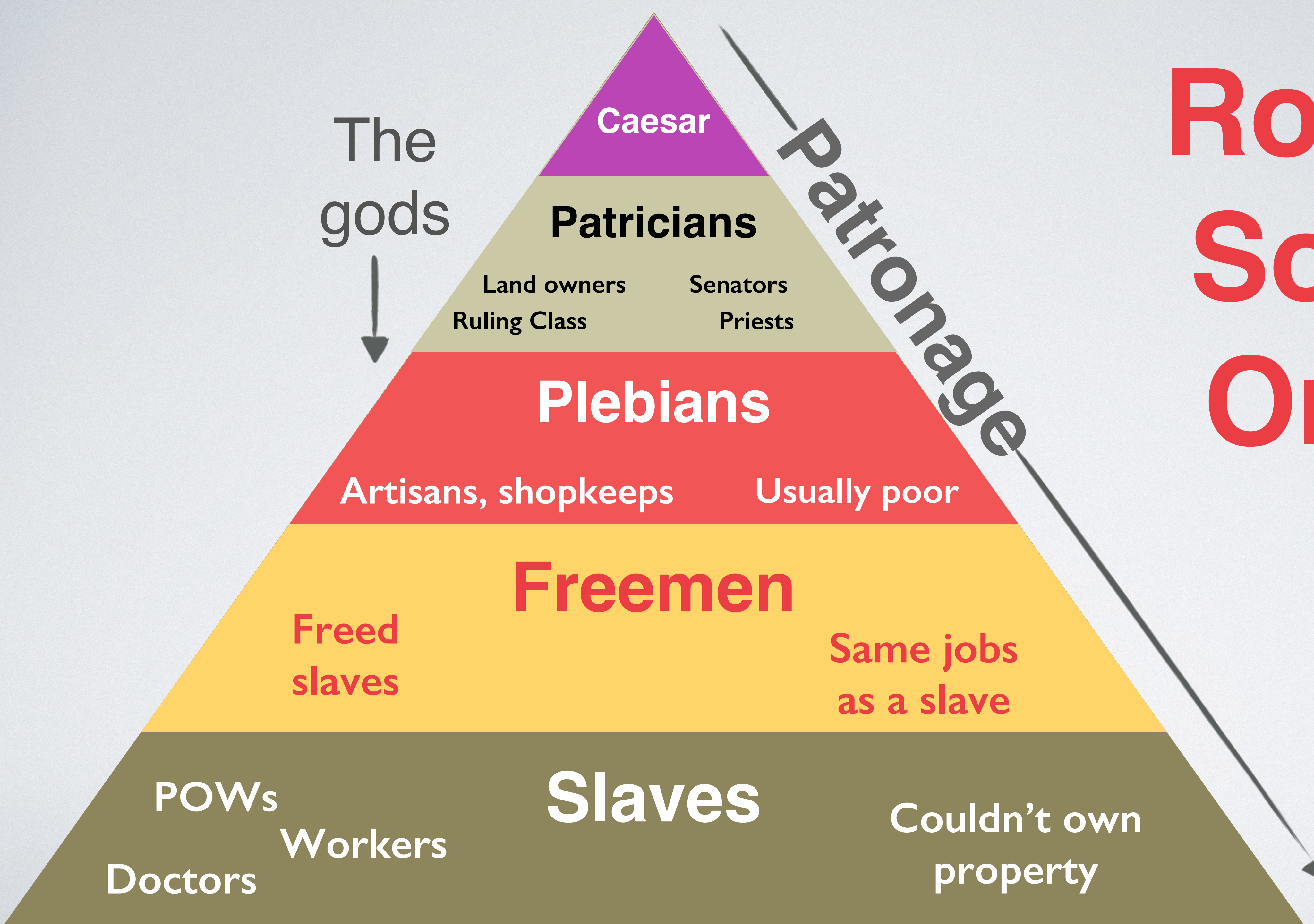
1. The Catholic religion
2. Christ on the Cross
3. Mardi-gras
4. Patron saints feast in Latin America
5. Calling someone Diva
6. Carnival in Brazil
7. North Korean President Kim Jong

Imperial Cult

- Required to proclaim Caesar as God
- Fastest growing religion in the Empire
- Prayer to Caesar
- Sacrifice to Caesar
- Temples to Caesar
- Jewish exemption
 - Sacrifice & prayer on Caesar's behalf twice daily
 - Jewish Tax (Mark 12:14)



Roman Social Order



Ceasar

Patronage

Patricians

Plebeians

Freemen

Slaves

→ Patron of the Empire

→ Son of God

→ Savior

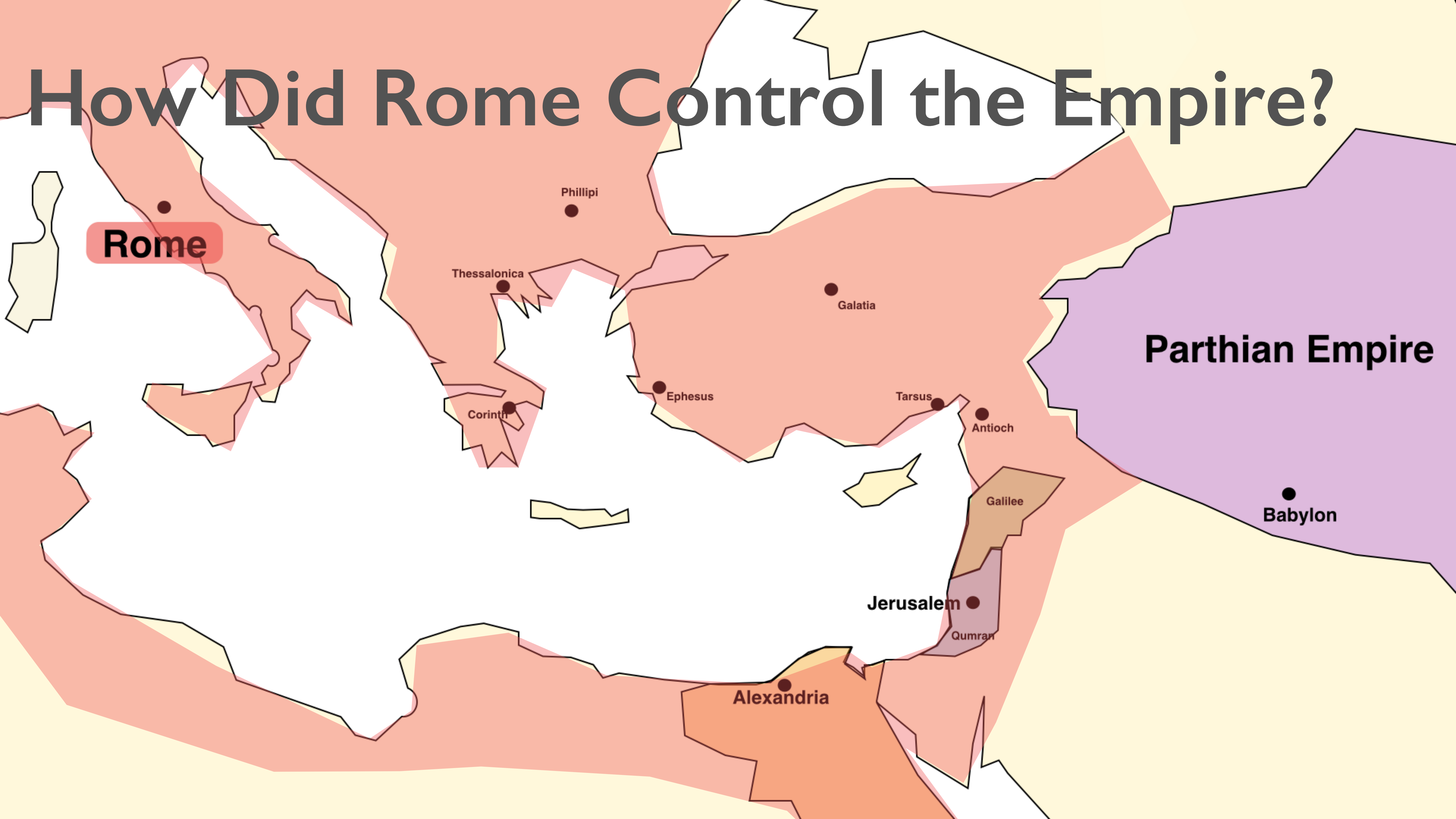
→ Lord, Master, *Kurios*

→ Peace on Earth (*Pax Romana*)

→ Birthday as “Gospel”

→ “Faith” of Caesar

How Did Rome Control the Empire?



Rome

Thessalonica

Phillipi

Galatia

Ephesus

Tarsus

Antioch

Galilee

Jerusalem

Qumran

Alexandria

Corinth

Babylon

Parthian Empire

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Rome

Parthian Empire

How did Rome control the other areas?



Thessalonica

Phillipi

Galatia

Corinth

Ephesus

Tarsus

Antioch

Galilee

Jerusalem

Qumran

Alexandria

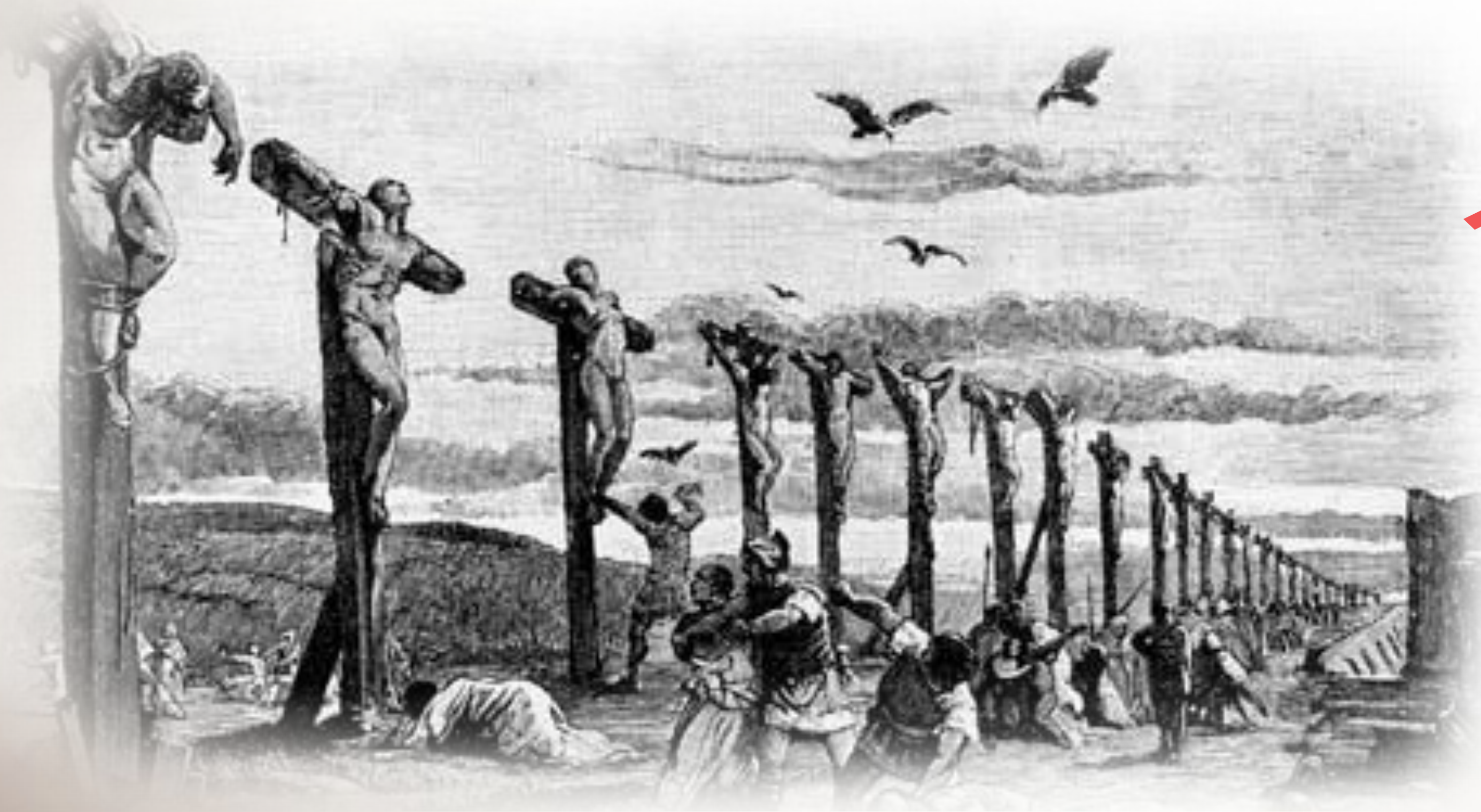
Babylon

Crucifixion

Shame

Afterlife?

Fear



A History of Fear and Subjugation to a Divine King

- “If you eat of it, you will be like God...”
- Sons of God and the daughters of men
- Nimrod
- Pharaoh
- Kings of Israel
- Nebuchadnezzar
- Antiochus Epihanes
- Alexander Janus
- Caesar
- Kim Jong Il
- Hitler
- And many more....

Method of Control?

Shameful

Death

Philippians 2:5-11

Set your mind in this manner, the same manner that was also in Messiah Yeshua,

who, being in the embodied form of God, did not consider that **equal form with God as a thing to be take of advantage of**;

but rather he set aside any claim to divine title by taking upon himself the embodied form of a servant and being born into the nature of man.

And being found in human appearance, **Yeshua humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death**; put to a shameful death on a cross like a rebel!

For this reason, **God honored him** above all others and graciously granted him to have a reputable name which is to be above all other names.

The result will be that at the name of Yeshua every knee will bow, of those in heaven and on earth and in the underworld, and **every tongue shall publicly declare Yeshua as their “Kurios”** for the honor of God the Father.

The Effect

Hebrews 2:14-16

...Yeshua, because of the suffering death was crowned with glory and honor...

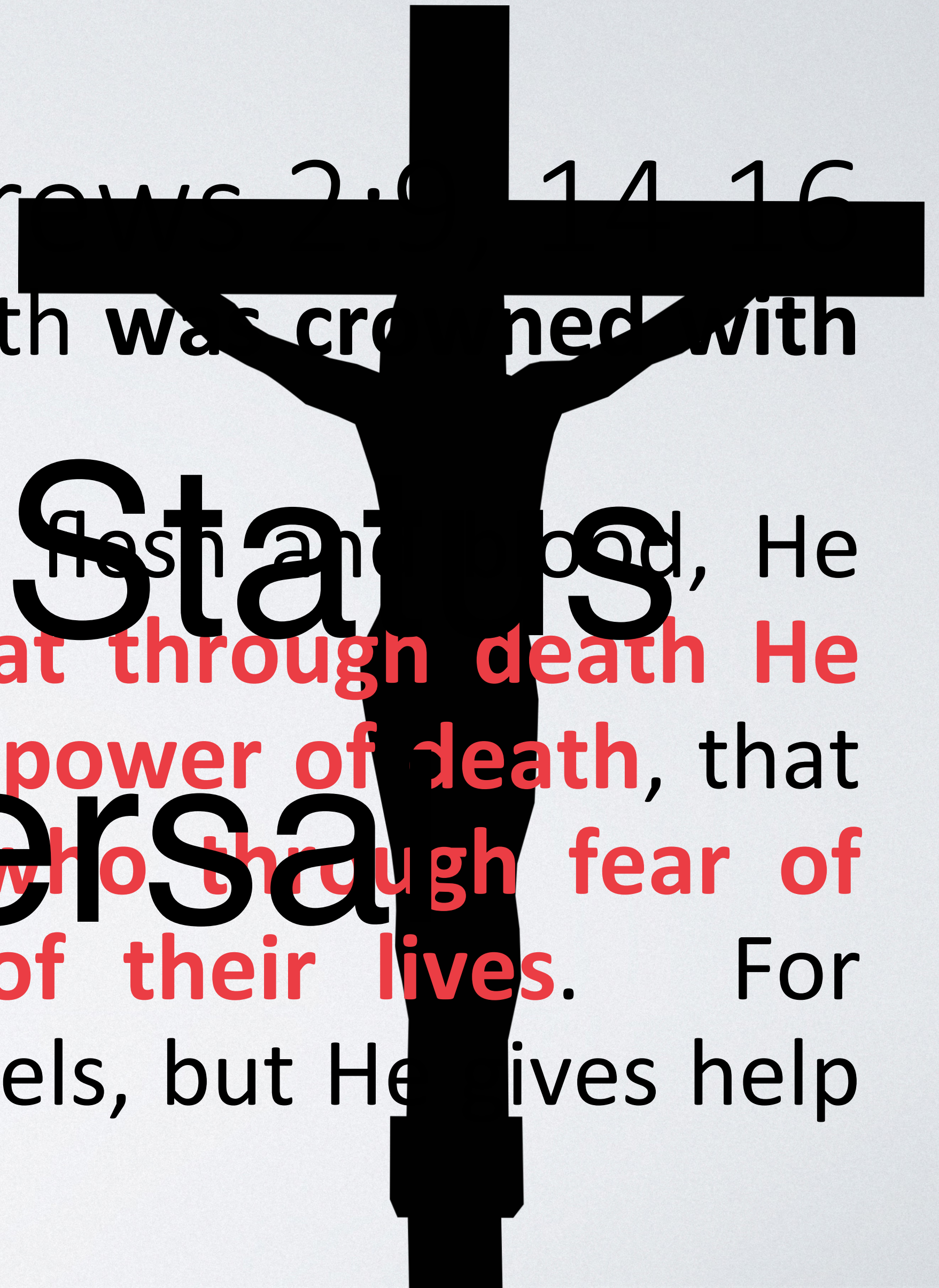
Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself also partook of the same, that through death He

might render powerless who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all of their lives. For

assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendants of Abraham!

Honor-Status

Reversal



Paul Against the Empire

Who is Your Patron?

Caesar

Yeshua

PAUL'S IMPERIAL CULT ISSUES IN CORINTH

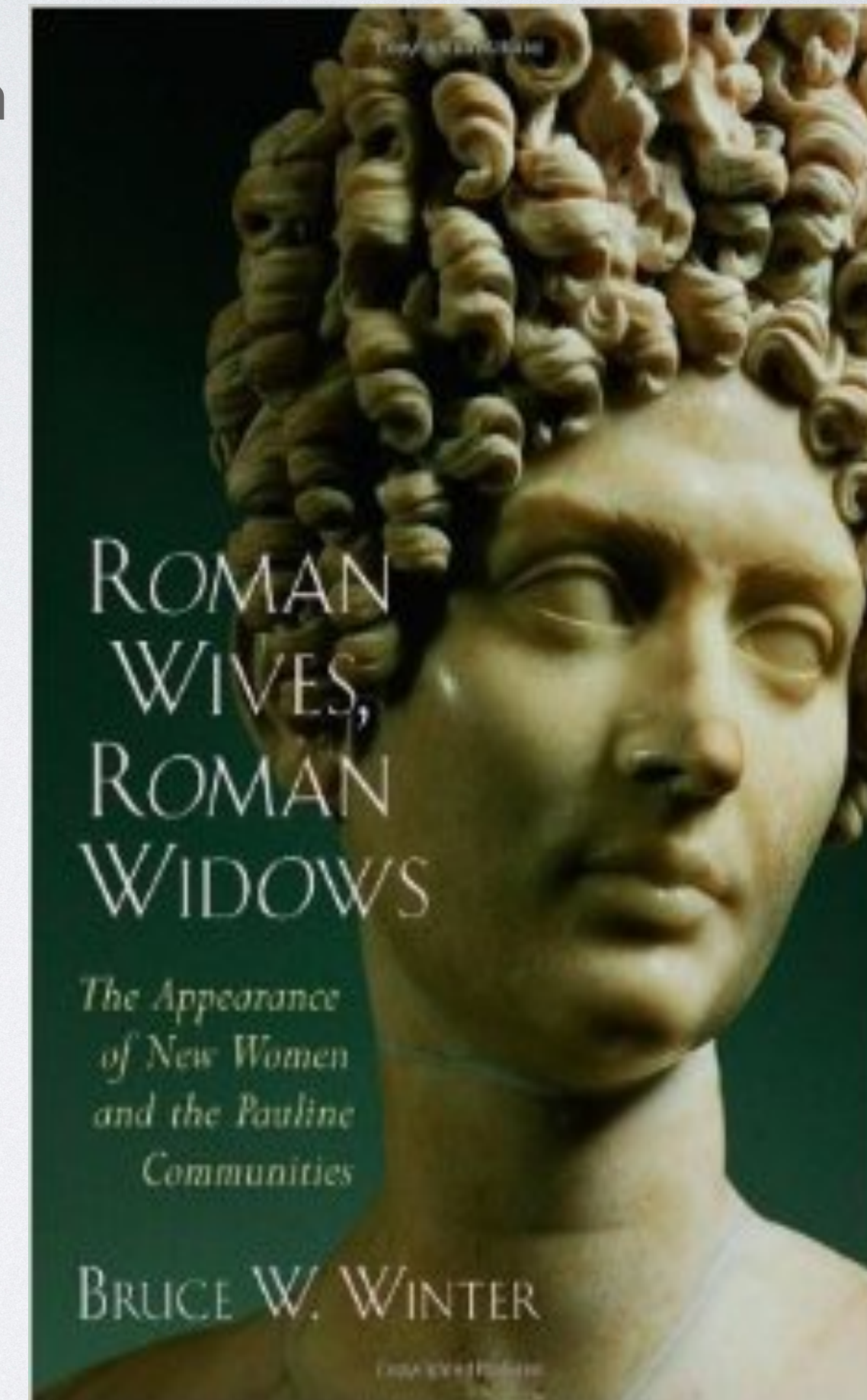
Homosexuality in Roman Society (page 110) after Paul left corinth

The Veil of the Married Roman Woman (128 corinth)

Sign of the Adulteress (page 82) Roman Wives roman Widows/ page 99

What was the “New Roman Woman” pg 21-22 Roman wives

Banquets of Patronage in Imperial Cult



CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

1Co 11:

1 Be imitators of me, even as I also am of Messiah.

2 Now I praise you, brothers, that you remember me in all things, and hold firm the traditions, even as I delivered them to you.

3 But I would have you know that the head of every man is Messiah, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Messiah is Elohim.

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.

Priests

Religious activities of the Roman state religion were overseen and presided over by priests. They were drawn from members of the ruling class of Rome, and were organised in 'colleges' and sub-groups with particular functions.

For example, there were pontifices (pontiffs), augurs (associated with interpretation of auspices - signs given by the gods through the flight of birds, thunder, lightning, and other natural phenomena), haruspices (originally of Etruscan origin, consulted about prodigies), flamines or individual gods, and fetiales, associated with the declaration of war.

The chief priest was known as the pontifex maximus, a title that was subsequently used by Roman Catholic popes. In the Republican period of Roman history, the priests typically were also politicians, and religious rituals could be - and were - exploited for political advantage.



Religious revival was one of the most important policies pursued by Augustus, the first Roman emperor. In 12 BC he took the office of pontifex maximus for himself, and it remained a prerogative of the emperor, emphasising the link between politics and state religion, until Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire.

The image shown here is that of a statue from Rome, depicting Augustus - who is wearing the veil associated with Roman priests.



Religious practices

The actual substance of the Roman state religion lay in ritual rather than individual belief, and was collective rather than personal. The rituals consisted of festivals, offerings (often of food or wine) and animal sacrifices. These rituals had to be carried out regularly and correctly in order to retain the favour of the gods towards the state, household or individual.

The image shown here is that of a sculpted relief of c.AD 176-80, depicting the emperor Marcus Aurelius offering a sacrifice. He is veiled as a priest, and stands by a small altar, along with the bull that is to be sacrificed, a flute-player and (to the right) the victimarius, who actually killed the animal, with his axe. Between the emperor and the bull is a priest, a flamen, who can be identified by his distinctive headgear, which has a spike on it.



Typically these rituals were performed out of doors - Roman temples were not places for group worship like modern churches, mosques or synagogues are, but were store-houses for a statue of the god, and for equipment connected with the cult.

Sacrifices generally took place on an altar in front of the temple. The relief shown here depicts a temple in the background, probably the Capitoline temple of Jupiter, in Rome, with its three doors to the rooms dedicated to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva.

The absence of strong elements of personal belief, salvation and morality in the Roman state religion may be one of the reasons why certain kinds of philosophy (like that of Stoicism) and non-state cults (like Isis-worship or Mithraism, for example) were popular alongside the state religion.



http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/roman_religion_gallery_06.shtml

1 CORINTHIANS

1 Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Messiah.

2 Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you.

3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Messiah; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Messiah is God.

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.

5 But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonors her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven.

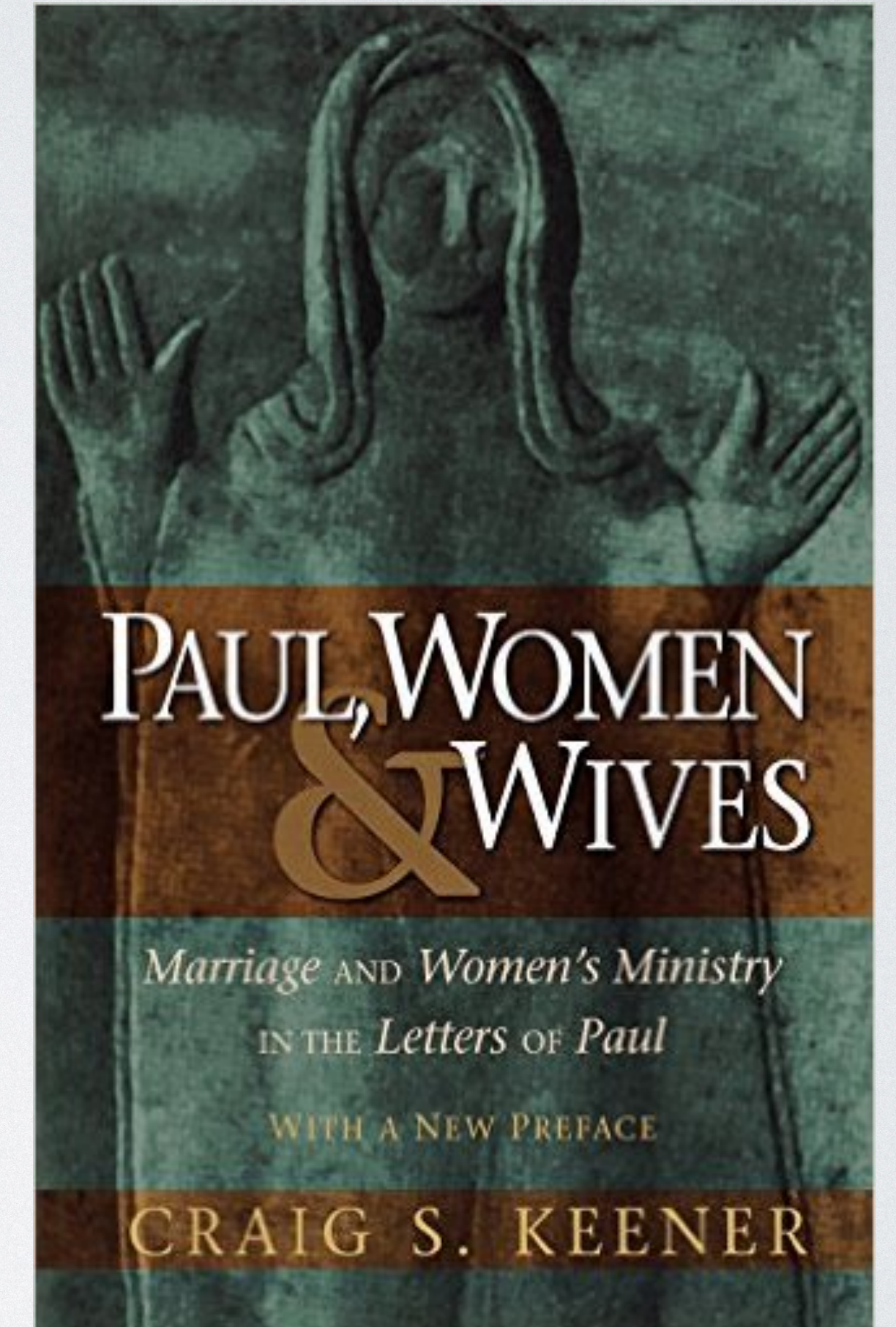
6 For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled.

7 For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.



PURITY OF THE WOMAN IN ANCIENT GREECE

1. Under classical Athenian law, a wife who needlessly entered the public sphere placed her honor as a faithful wife in grave danger.
2. Marriage contracts from first or second century bce Egypt could include the demand that the wife not leave the home without her husband's permission



Roman women were, however, much less secluded, although some moralists ideally wished them to be more secluded than they were. It was reported that in an earlier period a husband might have divorced his wife for going into public unveiled, or disciplined his wife or daughter for conversing publicly with another man. Writing in Greek in the Roman period, Plutarch extols the modesty of the virtuous woman who, when a man praised the beauty of her suddenly exposed arm, retorted that its beauty was not meant for the public. Plutarch goes on to explain that a woman's talk should also be kept private within the home. For him, "keeping at home and keeping silence" are joint aspects of a wife's virtue; she "ought to do her talking either to her husband or through her husband." He further recommends "a virtuous woman ought to be most visible in her husband's company, and to stay in the house and hide herself when he is away."

Prostitutes or Pagan Prophetesses?

Why would the Corinthian Christian women's uncovered heads have caused offense? One recurrent suggestion is that an uncovered head was the traditional garb of prostitutes.

Dress could indeed sometimes indicate that a woman was a prostitute, and some morally disreputable members of high society purportedly liked this kind of apparel: "typically, bright colors, a tunic showing part of their legs, diaphonous fabrics and a toga instead of the customary cloak. Elaborate hairdressing and makeup were part of the self-presentation for the better-class whores."

1Ti 2:

9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;

10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.