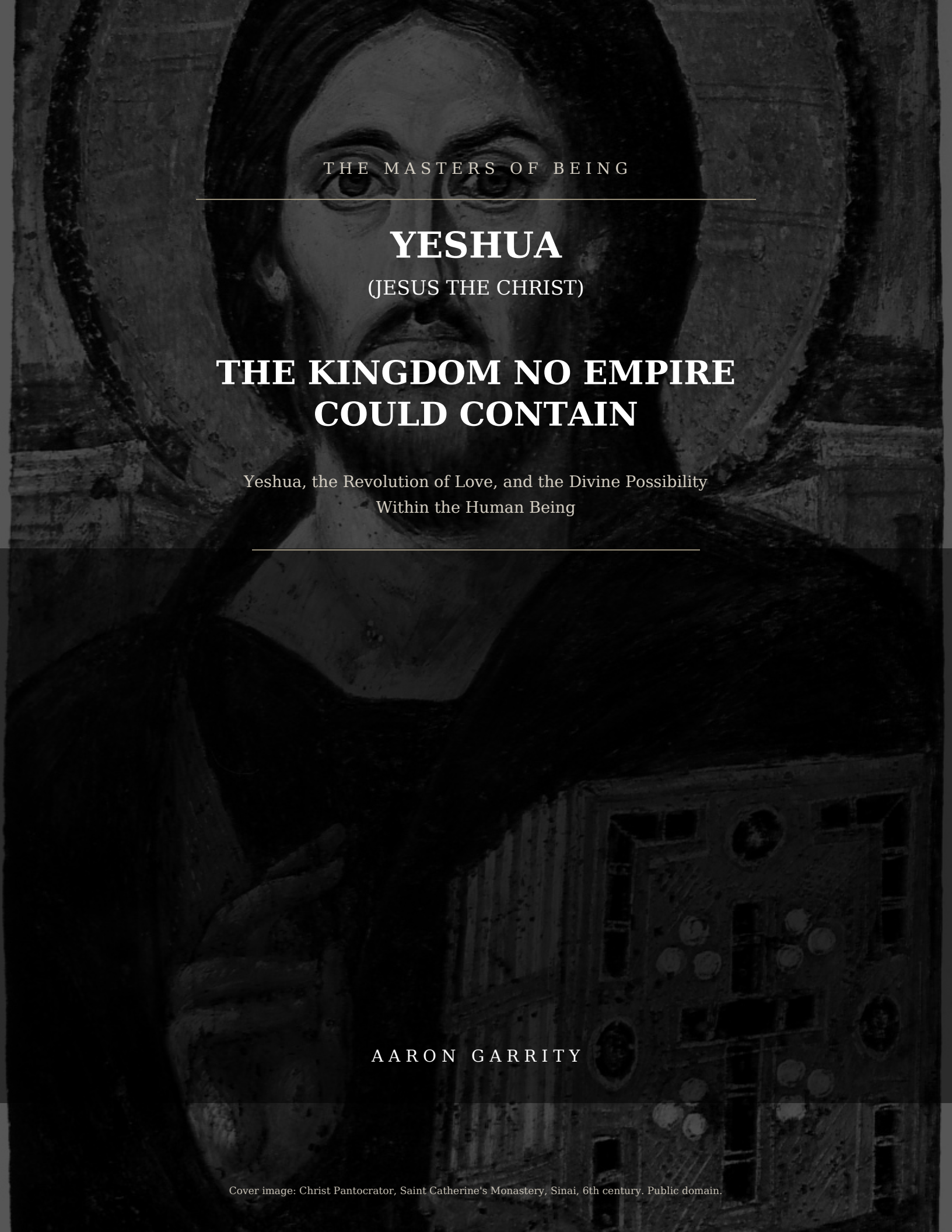




THE MASTERS OF BEING

YESHUA

(JESUS THE CHRIST)

**THE KINGDOM NO EMPIRE
COULD CONTAIN**

Yeshua, the Revolution of Love, and the Divine Possibility
Within the Human Being

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Cover image: Christ Pantocrator, Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, 6th century. Public domain.

THE MASTERS OF BEING

PROLOGUE

THE MAN NO EMPIRE UNDERSTOOD

The governor and the prisoner stood facing one another.

One possessed soldiers, courts, titles, and the authority of Rome. The other had been arrested in darkness, abandoned by many of his followers, interrogated through the night, and delivered into the hands of an empire that specialized in making examples of men like him.

With a word, Pontius Pilate could release a prisoner, condemn him, or summon armed men.

Behind him stood Caesar, and behind Caesar stood the machinery of conquest: legions, taxation, spectacle, intimidation, and the carefully cultivated belief that Roman power was permanent.

Before him stood Yeshua.

He had no army, no office, and no institution behind him.

He had not conquered a city, commanded a soldier, or accumulated the visible instruments through which history is supposedly made. His closest companions were fishermen, laborers, women, political outsiders, and men whose courage was already beginning to fail them. One disciple had betrayed him. Another would deny knowing him. Soon, nearly everyone who had celebrated his arrival in Jerusalem would disappear into the safety of the crowd.

By every measurement available to Rome, Pilate was the powerful man.

Yeshua was the defeated one.

And yet, two thousand years later, the prisoner remains more alive in the human imagination than the governor who sentenced him.

Pilate is remembered primarily because he once stood in the presence of Yeshua.

That reversal contains the beginning of everything.

Rome understood the power to command, but not the power to awaken. It understood the authority to punish, but not the authority carried by a human being who could no longer be frightened into betraying himself. It understood how to occupy territory, collect tribute, suppress rebellion, and crucify bodies along public roads.

What it could not understand was a kingdom that required no territory.

It could not comprehend a sovereignty located within the human being.

It did not know what to do with a man who would not seize power, bow before power, or allow power to determine who he was.

Pilate questioned Yeshua as though the prisoner's life depended upon providing the correct answers. But beneath the visible interrogation, another judgment was taking place. The empire was standing before a different standard of authority - and it did not recognize that it, too, was being revealed.

Pilate reportedly asked, "What is truth?"

It may be one of history's most consequential questions. Yet the tragedy is not that Pilate lacked an answer. The tragedy is that he asked the question while looking directly at a life that had become an answer - and then turned away.

Perhaps this is still the human condition.

We ask for truth while resisting the life truth would require of us.

We construct doctrines around men whose courage we admire so that we will not have to reproduce their courage. We praise those who surrendered everything while continuing to negotiate the terms of our own surrender. We turn revelation into institution, institution into identity, and identity into a boundary separating the saved from the condemned.

Then we call the boundary holy.

Yeshua has been adored for centuries. But adoration and understanding are not the same.

He has been painted, sculpted, preached, defended, politicized, commercialized, sentimentalized, and placed at the center of civilizations whose conduct often contradicted his own. His cross has been carried by saints and armies, mystics and monarchs, healers and inquisitors. It has comforted the dying, inspired the oppressed, justified conquest, adorned cathedrals, hung above hospital beds, and rested against the chests of people who rarely considered what it might ask of them.

The most recognizable person in Western civilization may also be among its most obscured.

This did not happen only because institutions corrupted him. That explanation is too simple. Institutions preserved stories that might otherwise have disappeared. Communities carried his teachings across continents and centuries. Monks, scholars, mothers, martyrs, artists, reformers, and ordinary believers kept his presence alive through war, persecution, collapse, and time.

Christianity has produced breathtaking acts of courage, mercy, beauty, sacrifice, and service.

It has also sometimes committed the ancient error of every empire: attempting to possess what can only be entered.

The Kingdom Yeshua announced could not be contained by Rome. It cannot be contained by Christianity either.

That is not an argument against Christianity. It is a recognition of the immensity of the Christ.

Yeshua did not spend his life constructing an idol of himself. He turned attention toward the Father, toward the Kingdom, and toward the change required within the person hearing him. Yet history has often made an image of the teacher easier to adore than the way of being he embodied. An idol asks for reverence. A living teaching asks for participation.

The distinction matters.

There is the historical Yeshua: a Jewish teacher formed within the spiritual world of Israel, walking through Galilee and Judea under Roman occupation. He spoke of God, Torah, justice, mercy, repentance, forgiveness, and a Kingdom already drawing near. He touched people others considered unclean. He ate with the morally suspect. He treated women with a dignity that unsettled the social order around him. He confronted religious hypocrisy, warned against the seductions of wealth, and refused the forms of domination by which power usually preserves itself.

There is also the institutional Jesus: the figure interpreted through creeds, councils, denominations, empires, translations, rituals, political movements, and centuries of theological conflict. This Jesus has been used to bless both peace and war, liberation and subjugation, radical compassion and merciless judgment.

And there is the living Christ: the presence that cannot be confined to the past, the institution, or the argument.

These are not three different beings. They are three dimensions of humanity's encounter with one mystery. Yet when they are collapsed carelessly into one another, we lose our ability to see what happened. The historical man disappears beneath the monument. The institution claims ownership of the infinite. The living Christ becomes either a doctrinal possession or a vague spiritual metaphor.

This work will attempt neither. It will not strip Yeshua of divinity to make him acceptable to the modern mind, nor use divinity to protect him from serious examination. Where history leaves uncertainty, mystery will remain mystery. Contemporary convictions will not be placed into the mouth of a first-century teacher.

But neither will it approach him as though he were merely an artifact.

Yeshua does not belong only to historians and theologians. He belongs wherever a person enters the wilderness without applause, certainty, position, or control; wherever a father confronts the unfinished parts of himself, a leader discovers that influence can serve either ego or humanity, or success fails to answer what cannot be bought.

He belongs to those whose lives have been dismantled in a day: death arriving, loyalties collapsing, financial structures failing, familiar futures disappearing almost simultaneously. He belongs to the person who fights reality for years before finally whispering, exhausted and perhaps for the first time honestly:

I will follow.

Not because the path has become clear or the suffering explained, but because resistance has finally surrendered its claim to sovereignty.

This is where teachings become real.

A philosophy that survives only in the sanctuary has not yet encountered life. A love that exists only among the agreeable is not the love Yeshua taught. Forgiveness that has never faced betrayal remains an attractive theory. Faith that depends upon favorable circumstances is merely optimism dressed in sacred language.

Yeshua brought his teaching into contact with bodies, money, illness, appetite, social contempt, political danger, grief, hypocrisy, and death. He did not teach humanity how to escape the human condition. He revealed another way of inhabiting it.

The distinction between worshiping Yeshua and following him begins here.

Worship can remain ceremonial; following cannot. Belief asks what we accept about his identity. Following asks what his life exposes about ours, then carries that question into our relationships, ambitions, resentments, loyalties, and use of power.

To follow Yeshua is not to imitate every external feature of a life lived two millennia ago. It is to become inwardly available to the same divine movement: love without sentimentality, mercy without blindness, truth without cruelty, authority without domination, surrender without defeat, and courage without hatred.

This is far more demanding than admiration.

It is also more dangerous.

A worshiped Christ can be placed safely above us. A living Christ must be allowed to move through us.

This is where the idea sometimes called Christ consciousness becomes both illuminating and perilous. It is illuminating because Yeshua repeatedly directs attention toward transformation. The Kingdom is not merely a future political arrangement or a reward reserved for the dead. It is near. It is among us. It is within reach. It asks for eyes capable of seeing and a human being capable of becoming.

But Christ consciousness becomes perilous when it is used to dissolve Yeshua into an abstraction - as though he were merely one illustration of a generic spiritual principle, interchangeable with every teacher and reducible to whatever the modern seeker already wishes to believe.

The Christ may be more universal than Christianity has sometimes permitted.**That does not mean Yeshua is less singular than history remembers.****The challenge is to hold both truths without diminishing either.**

Something unprecedented entered human history through him. Christ was not his surname. It was a title carrying the claim of anointing, divine purpose, and union with the Father. Yet a title displayed from a distance can become another object of devotion, protecting us from the transformation it names. Yeshua directed worship toward God and embodied a unity with the Father so complete that the Father's will was no longer heard as a foreign command. It moved as the purpose of his own being.

This is not the inflation of the human ego into God. It is almost the opposite: the surrender of the divided self until divine purpose can move through a human life without being distorted by fear, appetite, vanity, or control. Yeshua reveals this possibility at a magnitude that remains singular, yet his life continually turns toward others as invitation. The light is not given merely to be admired. It is given so that human beings might learn to carry light.

Whether one understands the event through incarnation, revelation, divine embodiment, or mystery, Yeshua cannot be honestly encountered without confronting the scale of his claim upon the human possibility.

He did not merely tell people that they were loved.

He showed what a human life could become when it was no longer governed by fear, status, exclusion, appetite, retaliation, or death.

He did not simply preach love as kindness. He revealed love as a form of power.

Sentiment depends upon favorable conditions. Love reveals itself when conditions turn against it. It sees clearly, acts firmly, and refuses to become hatred.

This love is not weak. Weakness cannot do what Yeshua asked. It takes enormous interior strength to remain merciful without becoming naive, to forgive without denying reality, to confront hypocrisy without becoming self-righteous, and to resist an enemy without allowing the enemy to colonize the soul.

That was the Kingdom Rome could not understand.

Rome believed power moved from the outside inward. Caesar issued the order; the world obeyed.

Yeshua reversed the movement.

The Kingdom begins within and moves outward. It alters perception before it alters circumstance. It liberates the person before it reforms the structure. It creates men and women whom intimidation cannot finally possess. Once that happens, empire encounters a limit it cannot overcome.

Yeshua appears to have lived from the immediacy of that inner Kingdom. He went where the moment opened, listened for the Father's movement within it, and acted without requiring the entire road to be revealed. In such a life, "Thy will" is not submission to a distant ruler. It is the gradual ending of separation between human will and divine purpose.

We face that alignment every day. Consciousness is not a permanent rank we achieve. It is closer to an inner temperature, rising or falling through the quality of each choice. Fear can possess the next moment, or love can. Vanity can direct it, or service can. We do not choose the whole journey at once. We choose what is permitted to move through us now.

It may imprison a body, humiliate a person, or inflict a wound. But it cannot compel inward allegiance, determine human worth, or decide what the wound will become.

This is why the crucifixion cannot be understood only as an execution. It is the collision of two architectures of power.

Empire says: Obey, or I will destroy you. Yeshua answers: You may destroy me, but I will not become you. One rules through fear and requires enemies. The other passes through fear and refuses to let hatred organize the soul.

This does not make injustice irrelevant. It makes the human response to injustice even more consequential. Yeshua's mercy never required him to call hypocrisy integrity or exploitation righteousness. He forgave, but he also saw clearly. He welcomed the

rejected, but he did not flatter the powerful. He refused condemnation as a weapon while speaking words sharp enough to expose the architecture of religious deceit.

Love, in Yeshua, did not replace truth.

Love determined how truth would be carried.

And when every visible form of his power had been removed - when the crowds were gone, the disciples scattered, the body broken, and the empire convinced that order had been restored - something remained beyond Rome's reach.

This is the mystery at the center of the story.

Resurrection is not merely the reversal of death. It is the revelation that the deepest life cannot be understood within the categories of empire. Empire knows victory and defeat, possession and loss, dominance and submission, survival and extinction.

Resurrection introduces transformation.

What enters the tomb does not simply return to the life that existed before it. It passes through death and emerges beyond the authority death once possessed. The wounds remain, but they no longer testify only to defeat. They have become evidence of passage.

Perhaps this is why the risen Christ was sometimes difficult to recognize.

Human beings often ask for restoration: the familiar returned exactly as it was. Resurrection offers something more difficult - the life that becomes possible only after the former one has been surrendered.

That distinction is not confined to theology. It is written into human experience. There are losses after which we do not return to who we were. There are betrayals that permanently alter innocence, deaths that divide time, failures that dismantle identity, and seasons during which every external assurance seems to disappear.

We may spend years attempting to rebuild the person who entered the tomb.

But that person may not be the one meant to emerge.

The story of Yeshua matters because it refuses to make suffering the final authority. It does not pretend the crucifixion was painless, the abandonment imaginary, or the wounds inconsequential. It does something far more powerful: it denies suffering the right to determine the ultimate meaning of a life.

This is the Yeshua we will seek: not the harmless figure preserved in stained glass or the possession of an institution, but the living presence whose flesh, history, agony, and sacred weight cannot be explained away.

We will seek the Jewish teacher who announced a Kingdom where no empire thought to look. The man who saw divinity's possibility in those religion had dismissed. The Christ who carried love beyond sentiment and forgiveness beyond fairness. The condemned prisoner who exposed the limitations of the governor judging him. The wounded presence who emerged from death without concealing what death had done.

And we will ask what becomes visible when his life passes through the questions of a modern one - through ambition and responsibility, fatherhood and failure, loyalty and betrayal, spiritual experience and moral uncertainty, the building of enterprises and the collapse of worlds.

We will not ask these questions in order to remake Yeshua in our image.

We will ask them because every genuine encounter with him eventually turns the examination back upon us.

It is easier to ask whether Yeshua was divine than to ask what his life reveals about the divine possibility within us. It is easier to display a cross than to carry something costly without becoming bitter, false, or cruel. And it is easier to proclaim that Christ has risen than to ask whether anything in us has agreed to rise with him.

Pilate believed he was deciding what would become of Yeshua.

History revealed that Pilate had misunderstood the encounter.

Every generation now stands where he stood. We inherit our own empires, institutions, fears, loyalties, and methods of self-protection. We encounter the same unpossessable presence. And somewhere beneath all our theology, argument, certainty, and doubt, the question remains:

Who do you say that I am?

But another question follows it - one asked not only by words, but by the architecture of Yeshua's life:

What will become of you if your answer is true?