

To the Generation Leaving

Bonus Chapter in Decoding Dogma

You were not supposed to ask questions.

You were supposed to accept what you were taught, memorize the verses that supported it, and pass it on intact to the next generation. Your youth group leaders handed you a map. Your parents walked you through its landmarks. Your pastors assured you it was reliable. The map told you where safety could be found and where danger lived. It promised that if you followed its lines carefully, you would arrive at certainty, belonging, and peace.

But the map lied.

Not about everything. Not even about most things. But about the things that mattered most. It lied about the character of God. It lied about the scope of grace. It lied about who was in and who was out. It lied about what the gospel was actually promising. And when you started noticing the contradictions between what the map said and what you saw in Jesus himself, you were told the problem was not the map. The problem was you.

Because this is what happened. You read the Gospels. You watched Jesus eat with sinners, touch lepers, defend the woman caught in adultery, heal on the Sabbath, and reserve his strongest words not for the immoral but for the religious. You saw him refuse to condemn, refuse to exclude, refuse to make people earn their way into his presence. You watched him move from a completely different set of assumptions about God, humanity, and the Kingdom.

And then you looked at the system you were raised in, the one using his name, and you could not make them fit.

You were told you were prideful for questioning. Deceived for doubting. Rebellious for refusing to accept answers that no longer made sense. You were warned that if you kept asking, you would shipwreck your faith. That if you walked away from the answers you had been given, you would be walking away from God himself.

But what you were actually doing was walking toward Jesus. And away from the system built in his name that no longer looked anything like him.

So you tried to stay. You tried to make it work. You prayed harder. You read the same passages again, hoping they would finally say what you had been told they said. You looked for loopholes in your own questions, ways to dismiss the dissonance, strategies to silence the voice inside you that kept whispering, This does not sound like Jesus.

But the questions would not go away. And eventually, you had to make a choice. You could keep performing certainty you no longer felt, or you could walk into the unknown and see what remained when the fear was gone.

You chose to leave. And it cost you more than you expected.

What You Lost

You lost the community that raised you. The people who shared your language, your stories, your whole framework for understanding the world. The ones who knew your testimony, who prayed with you at summer camp, who baptized you and celebrated your confirmation. The people who were supposed to be your family forever.

When you started asking questions, they grew nervous. When you voiced doubts, they grew defensive. When you said you could no longer affirm doctrines that were harming people, they said you were the one causing harm. And when you finally walked away, they did not follow you to ask what happened. They mourned you as lost.

You lost the map. The Old Economy gave you certainty. It told you exactly what to believe, how to behave, and who to avoid. It ranked people by their doctrine and measured spiritual maturity by theological precision. You knew where you stood. You knew who was safe and who was dangerous. You knew what to do when you failed and how to get back into God's good graces.

Now you have none of that. The lines are gone. The categories have collapsed. The easy answers no longer work. And even though the map was a cage, at least it told you where the walls were. Now you are standing in open space, and it is terrifying.

You lost your role. In the Old Economy, you were the missionary. The evangelist. The one who knew the way and could lead others to safety. Your life had purpose. You had a mission. Every conversation was an opportunity. Every relationship was a possible rescue. You mattered because you were part of the saving operation.

Now you do not know what you are. You are no longer a lifeguard. You are no longer a supervisor. You are no longer the one with the answers. And without that role, you feel adrift. If you are not saving people, what are you even doing?

You lost the vocabulary. You still love Jesus, but you cannot use the word gospel without feeling sick. You still value Scripture, but you cannot say the Bible says without hearing all the ways that phrase has been weaponized. You still believe in grace, but the word has been so distorted by people who used it to cover abuse that it no longer means what it once meant.

You are left speaking a language you can no longer trust, trying to name a reality the old words cannot hold.

And beneath all of this, you lost something quieter but more painful. You lost the belief that the people who raised you were safe. That the systems they built were good. That their certainty was trustworthy. You lost the ability to go home and feel at peace.

What You Saw That They Could Not

But here is what you need to hear.

You were not deceived. You were not rebellious. You were not prideful. You saw something true, and you refused to pretend you had not seen it.

You saw Jesus' actual worldview. And you recognized that it was incompatible with the system using his name.

You Saw How Jesus Treated People

The religious leaders of Jesus' day operated from a worldview of scarcity, boundaries, and conditional belonging. They built elaborate systems to determine who was in and who was out, who was clean and who was unclean, who deserved God's presence and who needed to be kept at a distance. They used the Scriptures to justify those divisions. They believed they were protecting something holy.

But Jesus did not move that way.

He touched lepers when the law said they were untouchable. He ate with tax collectors when association meant contamination. He spoke to the Samaritan woman when engagement meant defilement. He defended the woman caught in adultery when the law demanded her death. He healed on the Sabbath when observance meant waiting.

Again and again, Jesus placed the person in front of him above the system designed to manage them.

You saw this. And then you looked at the churches using his name, the ones excluding LGBTQ people, the ones building walls at borders, the ones using Scripture to justify harm, and you recognized the disconnect. The system claimed to follow Jesus while operating from the exact worldview he spent his ministry dismantling.

You were not confused. You were seeing clearly.

You Saw What Jesus Said About God

The God you were introduced to was an auditor. A manager. A judge whose love was conditional and whose patience had limits. This God required constant performance, measured your worth by your obedience, and was always one mistake away from withdrawing approval. This God kept a ledger, and you were never quite sure whether you were in the black.

But that is not the God Jesus revealed.

Jesus said the Father runs toward the son who squandered everything. Not after the son cleaned himself up. Not after he proved he was sorry. Not after he earned his way back. The Father saw him while he was still far off and ran. The relationship was never in question. The son's standing was never conditional. What changed was not the Father's posture but the son's awareness.

Jesus said the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to find the one. He does not wait for the lost sheep to make its own way back. He does not make the sheep prove it deserves rescue. He goes. Because that is what love does when it is not constrained by scarcity or threat.

Jesus said the Kingdom belongs to children, to the poor in spirit, to the ones who have nothing to offer. Not to the theologically precise. Not to the morally superior. Not to the ones who got their doctrine right. To the ones who show up empty-handed.

You saw this. And you could not reconcile it with a gospel that required people to meet conditions before they could be loved.

You Saw What Drove Jesus to Anger

Jesus reserved his harshest words not for prostitutes, tax collectors, or sinners. He reserved them for the religious leaders. The ones who used Scripture to exclude. The ones who created heavy burdens and placed them on people's shoulders. The ones who locked the Kingdom and would not let others enter.

He called them whitewashed tombs. Blind guides. Hypocrites. Snakes. Not because they were immoral, but because they weaponized morality. Not because they were irreligious, but because they made religion a tool of control.

Jesus confronted the system, not the people the system marginalized.

You saw this. And then you looked at the religious structures around you, the ones shaming people for doubt, the ones weaponizing hell, the ones making people earn their belonging, and you recognized what Jesus would have confronted. The system claimed to speak for him while operating from the exact logic he opposed.

You were not being difficult. You were paying attention.

You Saw the Order Jesus Established

In every encounter, Jesus offered belonging before transformation.

To the woman caught in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you" came before "Go and sin no more." He secured her safety, established her worth, removed the threat of violence, and only then, from that place of security, invited her to live differently.

To the paralyzed man, "Your sins are forgiven" came before "Get up and walk." The religious leaders assumed the order should be reversed. Prove you can walk, then maybe we will talk

about forgiveness. But Jesus knew you cannot transform from a place of fear. You can only transform from a place of love.

To Zacchaeus, Jesus invited himself to dinner before Zacchaeus showed any sign of repentance. The meal came first. The transformation followed. Not because Jesus did not care about justice, but because he knew shame does not produce change. Only love does.

You saw this order. And you recognized that a gospel demanding transformation before offering belonging has it backwards.

What You Were Right About

You were right that the God you were introduced to did not sound like Jesus. The Old Economy's God was a manager. Jesus revealed a Father. The Old Economy's God required constant proof of worthiness. Jesus revealed a God who runs toward the prodigal. The Old Economy's God kept a ledger of debts. Jesus announced that the ledger was destroyed.

You were right to ask: if Jesus is the exact representation of God's nature, why does our theology make God sound nothing like him?

You were right that the Bible was being used to harm people. You watched the same verses weaponized against your LGBTQ friends, against women in leadership, against immigrants and refugees, against anyone who threatened the boundaries the Old Economy needed in order to survive. You were told this was biblical. That God's word was clear. That love meant enforcing the truth even when it crushed people.

But you read the same Bible and you saw Jesus use Scripture differently. When the religious leaders quoted Moses to justify stoning the woman, Jesus wrote in the dirt and said, "Let the one without sin cast the first stone." When they quoted the Sabbath law to condemn healing, Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." When they used Scripture to create hierarchies, Jesus said the last will be first and the first will be last.

You saw that Jesus prioritized people over systems. And you recognized that any use of Scripture producing the opposite is misuse.

You were right that fear was doing the work love could not. You grew up in a system powered by urgency. The urgency to get saved before it was too late. The urgency to evangelize before people died and went to hell. The urgency to stay pure, stay faithful, stay aligned, because one mistake could cost you everything.

You were told this urgency was love. That it proved how much God cared. That it showed how serious sin was. But you felt what it actually produced: anxiety, performance, shame, and an inability to rest. You could never do enough. You could never be sure enough. You could never outrun the fear that maybe, despite everything, you were still not safe.

And then you noticed: Jesus never operated from urgency. He slept in the boat during the storm. He took time to rest when crowds were pressing. He did not rush Lazarus's

resurrection. He did not panic about outcomes. He moved from rest, not fear. From confidence, not anxiety. From finished work, not frantic striving.

You recognized that a gospel producing chronic fear is not good news. And you were right.

You were right that inclusion was not compromise. The people who taught you said grace had limits. That God's love was infinite but his patience was not. That there were people outside the reach of redemption, and that maintaining the boundaries between "us" and "them" was a mark of faithfulness.

But when you read the Gospels, you kept finding Jesus crossing every boundary the religious system erected. Jew and Gentile. Clean and unclean. Righteous and sinner. Male and female. Insider and outsider. Every boundary the Old Economy needed in order to survive, Jesus dismantled.

When his disciples wanted to call down fire on the Samaritans, Jesus rebuked them. When Peter wanted to limit forgiveness to seven times, Jesus said seventy times seven. When the religious leaders wanted to exclude sinners, Jesus said he came for the sick, not the healthy.

You saw a worldview where the circle kept expanding. And you could not reconcile it with a gospel that kept drawing it smaller.

You were right to leave when staying required you to betray what you saw. They told you that leaving meant abandoning Jesus. That questioning meant losing your faith. That if you walked away from their answers, you would end up in darkness.

But you did not abandon Jesus. You left a system using his name to justify what he opposed. You did not lose your faith. You refused to keep pretending that control was trust and fear was love. You did not walk into darkness. You walked toward the Jesus you saw in the Gospels, even when it meant leaving behind the people who claimed to follow him.

You were right.

And the cost you have paid for being right does not mean you were wrong.

The Worldview You Saw

What you glimpsed in Jesus was not a set of beliefs to be memorized. It was a way of seeing reality when fear is no longer organizing it.

Jesus operated from abundance, not scarcity.

The Old Economy assumes there is not enough. Not enough grace. Not enough belonging. Not enough seats at the table. This scarcity creates competition, comparison, and the need for boundaries to protect what is limited.

But Jesus fed five thousand and had leftovers. He turned water into wine, and the best wine came last. He said the Kingdom is like a mustard seed that grows beyond all proportion, like

yeast that permeates the whole batch, like a treasure so valuable that everything else can be released in order to possess it.

He lived as though there was always more than enough. Because in the economy he announced, there is.

Jesus treated standing as fixed, not earned.

The religious system of his day, and ours, assumes that standing with God is a ladder you climb through performance. The better you behave, the higher you ascend. The more you fail, the further you fall.

But Jesus announced a different reality. The prodigal son was already a son, even in the pigpen. The paralytic was already forgiven, even before he could walk. The woman was already not condemned, even before she changed her behavior. Their standing was ontological, not transactional. It was who they were, not what they earned.

Jesus revealed that you cannot fall out of a standing you never had to achieve.

Jesus trusted internal authority, not external control.

The religious leaders of his day used the law as an external management system. Follow these rules. Avoid these people. Perform these rituals. Do these things and you will be righteous.

But Jesus said the Kingdom is within you. He said you will know them by their fruits, not their doctrinal precision. He asked, "Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?" He taught people to discern, not merely to comply. He located moral authority in the transformed heart, not the external code.

This is terrifying to any system needing people dependent on outside management. But it is exactly what Jesus taught.

Jesus defined love as presence, not control.

The Old Economy assumes that love means managing outcomes. If you love someone, you make sure they do not make harmful choices. You pressure, you correct, you withdraw support when they do not comply. You use consequences to force transformation. Love becomes a tool for producing the behavior you want.

But Jesus sat with sinners and did not lecture them. He stayed present with Peter even after Peter denied him. He offered the Kingdom to the thief on the cross without requiring a plan for behavior modification. He remained with his disciples even when they consistently misunderstood him.

Jesus loved people without needing them to change before he could stay.

Jesus lived as though death had lost.

The entire religious system, then and now, is powered by the threat of death. Behave or face exclusion. Believe or risk damnation. Stay in line or lose everything. Death is the enforcer. It is the deadline. It is the mechanism making fear effective.

But Jesus walked out of the tomb. And in doing so, he broke the only tool the Old Economy had for making you comply. If death cannot hold you, the ledger cannot threaten you. If the grave is empty, the audit is irrelevant. If resurrection is real, fear has lost its leverage.

Jesus lived from the other side of death. And he invited everyone to join him there.

What You Are Discovering Now

You are standing in the space between worldviews. The Old Economy has collapsed, but the New Economy does not yet feel solid. You have left the cage, but you have not yet learned to walk freely. The map is gone, but the instincts it trained into you are still firing.

This is not failure. This is the threshold.

You are discovering that leaving a system is not the same as leaving its effects. Your body still braces for judgment even when your mind knows the ledger is gone. Your reflexes still reach for control even when you have chosen trust. Your relationships still carry patterns formed under fear even when you are trying to love without conditions.

This is what the framework calls residue. The somatic memory of a system that no longer governs you but that taught you how to survive. You learned to perform. You learned to manage your image. You learned to monitor yourself constantly because the cost of failure felt catastrophic. Those patterns do not disappear the moment you intellectually reject the system that created them.

But residue is not your identity. It is debris. And debris can be cleared.

You are discovering that you do not have to have all the answers. Jesus himself did not operate from certainty about outcomes. He trusted the Father. He discerned the moment. He acted from love and left the results to God. He did not have a ten-step plan for every situation. He had presence. Attention. Listening. Discernment.

The Old Economy required certainty. Jesus' worldview requires trust. And trust is not the same as knowing. Trust is the willingness to remain present and discerning even when you cannot control the outcome.

You are discovering that the people you left behind are not evil. They are afraid. They are operating from the same worldview you once carried, the same system you once trusted. They believe they are protecting something precious. They believe that if they loosen their grip on the boundaries, everything will fall apart.

They are not wrong about the falling apart. The Old Economy does fall apart when you stop enforcing it. What they cannot yet see is that the ground beneath the rubble is solid. That

what collapses is not the foundation but the scaffolding. That the fear holding the system together was never love, and love does not need fear in order to do its work.

You cannot make them see this. You can only live it. The way Jesus did.

You are discovering that freedom is heavier than control. The Old Economy told you what to do. It gave you rules, roles, and clear expectations. Jesus' worldview requires you to decide. To discern. To take responsibility for your choices without hiding behind "God told me" or "the Bible says."

This is the cost of adulthood. The Old Economy kept you dependent. It made you a child needing outside management. Jesus' worldview makes you an heir carrying authority. And authority is not the same as certainty. Authority is the willingness to choose, to act, and to live with the consequences without blaming the system for your failures or crediting it for your successes.

This feels unbearable at first. But it is also where you become fully human.

You are discovering that you are not alone. There are thousands of you. Tens of thousands. A generation that grew up in the same system, learned the same verses, and reached the same breaking point. You thought you were the only one who could not stop seeing Jesus when you read the Gospels. You thought you were the only one who could not reconcile what he said with what the system taught.

But you are not alone. You are part of a generation that took Jesus seriously enough to let him dismantle the religion built in his name.

You are discovering that the grief is real, and it does not mean you made the wrong choice. You are allowed to mourn what you lost. The community. The certainty. The sense of purpose. The belief that the people who raised you were safe.

Grief is not doubt. Grief is honesty. It is the recognition that something real has ended, even if that thing was also harmful. You can grieve the loss of the Old Economy and still know you could not stay in it. Both are true.

What Comes Next

This framework exists because you were right to leave. And because leaving is not enough.

Deconstruction names what is broken. It identifies the lies, the abuses, the contradictions, the harms. It tears down the systems that no longer serve life. And that work is necessary. You could not build anything new while the old structure was still standing.

But deconstruction does not tell you what to build in its place.

What comes next is reconstruction based on Jesus' actual worldview. Not the sanitized, domesticated version the Old Economy created. But the radical, disruptive, fear-dismantling way of seeing reality that got him killed.

This is what the framework calls the New Economy. It is not new in the sense of novelty. It is new in the way resurrection is new. It does not add to what existed before. It transforms the foundation itself.

The New Economy begins where Jesus began. It begins with the recognition that the ledger is gone. That the audit is not coming. That death has lost its administrative authority and can no longer threaten you with exclusion. That your standing is ontological, not transactional. That you are not a project to be managed but an heir who is already held.

This is not theoretical. This is what Jesus announced. This is the Kingdom he proclaimed. This is the worldview he lived and died to reveal.

The work ahead is not to achieve this standing. Jesus already did that work. The work is to recognize it. To let your body catch up to what your mind is beginning to see. To practice living as though the fear that once governed you no longer has the final word.

The ten tenets you will encounter in this framework are not a new set of rules. They are landmarks. They describe the shape of life that emerges when you take Jesus' worldview seriously. When fear is no longer organizing the self. When love is no longer confused with control. When presence is no longer conditional on performance.

You will recognize some of this. You have already been living pieces of it. The moments when you chose to stay present with someone even when you could not fix them. The times when you refused to use shame as a tool of transformation. The decisions you made to honor someone's agency even when you were certain they were making the wrong choice.

These were not failures of faithfulness. These were moments when you were living Jesus' worldview, even if you did not yet have language for it.

What this framework offers is not a new cage. It is architecture. A way to see how the pieces fit together. A way to name what you have been experiencing so that you do not have to keep wondering whether you are losing your mind.

What You Need to Know Right Now

You do not have to have it all figured out. Jesus himself said his yoke is easy and his burden is light. He did not demand doctrinal perfection. He invited people to follow. To watch. To learn. To trust. The Old Economy demanded certainty as proof of faithfulness. Jesus required honesty.

You are not responsible for anyone else's faith. Jesus sent out the disciples and told them that if a town did not receive them, they should shake the dust off their feet and move on. He did not make them responsible for other people's responses. He did not tell them to

pressure, manipulate, or control. The Old Economy made you a lifeguard. Jesus' worldview makes you a witness. You announce the reality. You do not enforce it.

Your relationships do not have to end, but they will change. Some of the people you love will not be able to follow you into Jesus' actual worldview. Not yet. Maybe not ever. This does not mean you failed them. It means they are still living in a system that feels safer than freedom. You can love them without returning to the cage. Just as Jesus loved the rich young ruler even when he walked away.

The discomfort you feel is not evidence you are wrong. Jesus himself experienced this discomfort. The religious leaders were comfortable. They had their systems, their certainty, their answers. Jesus disrupted all of it. And they killed him for it. Growth is uncomfortable. Freedom is disorienting. And the vertigo you are feeling is not a sign that you have lost your way. It is a sign that you are following Jesus into unfamiliar territory.

You are allowed to rest. Jesus rested. He slept in boats. He withdrew to quiet places. He told his disciples to come away and rest. He did not operate from frantic urgency. The Old Economy kept you in constant urgency. Jesus' worldview invites you to live from finished work. The work is done. The Kingdom is here. You are free to stop performing and begin living.

The Bible is still yours. Jesus quoted Scripture constantly. But he quoted it to liberate, not control. To include, not exclude. To reveal the Father's character, not to weaponize rules. You are free to read it again without fear. To let Jesus' way of using Scripture teach you how to read it. To discover that what you were taught to see in it was often a projection of the Old Economy's needs, not the text's actual testimony.

You are not a heretic. You are doing what Jesus did. Every generation that has taken Jesus seriously enough to let him critique the systems built in his name has been called heretical by the generation before. The prophets were called dangerous. Jesus was called dangerous. Paul was called dangerous. Luther was called dangerous. The abolitionists were called dangerous. The people who argued for women's equality were called dangerous. You are in good company.

The Invitation

This framework is not asking you to believe something new. It is asking you to recognize what Jesus already revealed. The Old Economy collapsed the moment Jesus walked out of the tomb. Death lost its authority the moment it could not hold him. The ledger was destroyed the moment the veil tore. The age of fear-based religion ended in 70 AD when the temple fell and the system built on sacrifice, separation, and scarcity was exposed as obsolete.

You are not creating Jesus' worldview. You are waking up inside it.

Everything you were taught about Scripture, about Jesus, about the Kingdom, it is all still here. But the fear that distorted it is gone. What remains is what was always true: you are loved. You are held. You are secure. Not because you earned it. Not because you maintained it. But because it is the ground itself.

This is not an abandonment of your formation. It is a completion of it. Everything you learned in youth group, in Sunday school, in Bible studies and mission trips and summer camps, none of it was wasted. You were taught to take Jesus seriously. You were taught to value Scripture. You were taught to care about truth and to refuse easy answers.

The Old Economy thought it was training you to defend the system. But it was actually training you to see through it. To see Jesus clearly enough to recognize when something claiming his name did not look like him.

You were right to leave. And you were right to grieve. And you were right to sense that something else was possible.

Because what you saw in Jesus was real. And what you are discovering now is that you can build your life on it.

Welcome home.

What follows in this series is not a sales pitch. It is not an argument designed to win you over. It is a framework offered to those already standing in the rubble, looking for blueprints based on Jesus' actual worldview, the one the Gospels record and the one the religious system spent two thousand years trying to domesticate.

Saving Claude explores the foundation: inclusion, corporate humanity, and the character of the God Jesus revealed.

Decoding Death explores the mechanism: how death functioned as the enforcement tool of the Old Economy, and what changes when Jesus defeats it.

Decoding Dogma explores the life: what it looks like to live from Jesus' worldview instead of performing for the religious system built in his name.

You do not have to read them in order. You do not have to agree with everything. You do not have to adopt the language or the framework wholesale.

But if you are tired of deconstruction without reconstruction...

If you are hungry for a way to stay tethered to Jesus without returning to the cage...

If you need architecture for the world you are trying to build based on what he actually taught...

If you are ready to stop performing and start living the way Jesus did...

These books are for you. You were not supposed to ask questions.

But you did. And the questions led you to see Jesus clearly.

That was not an accident.