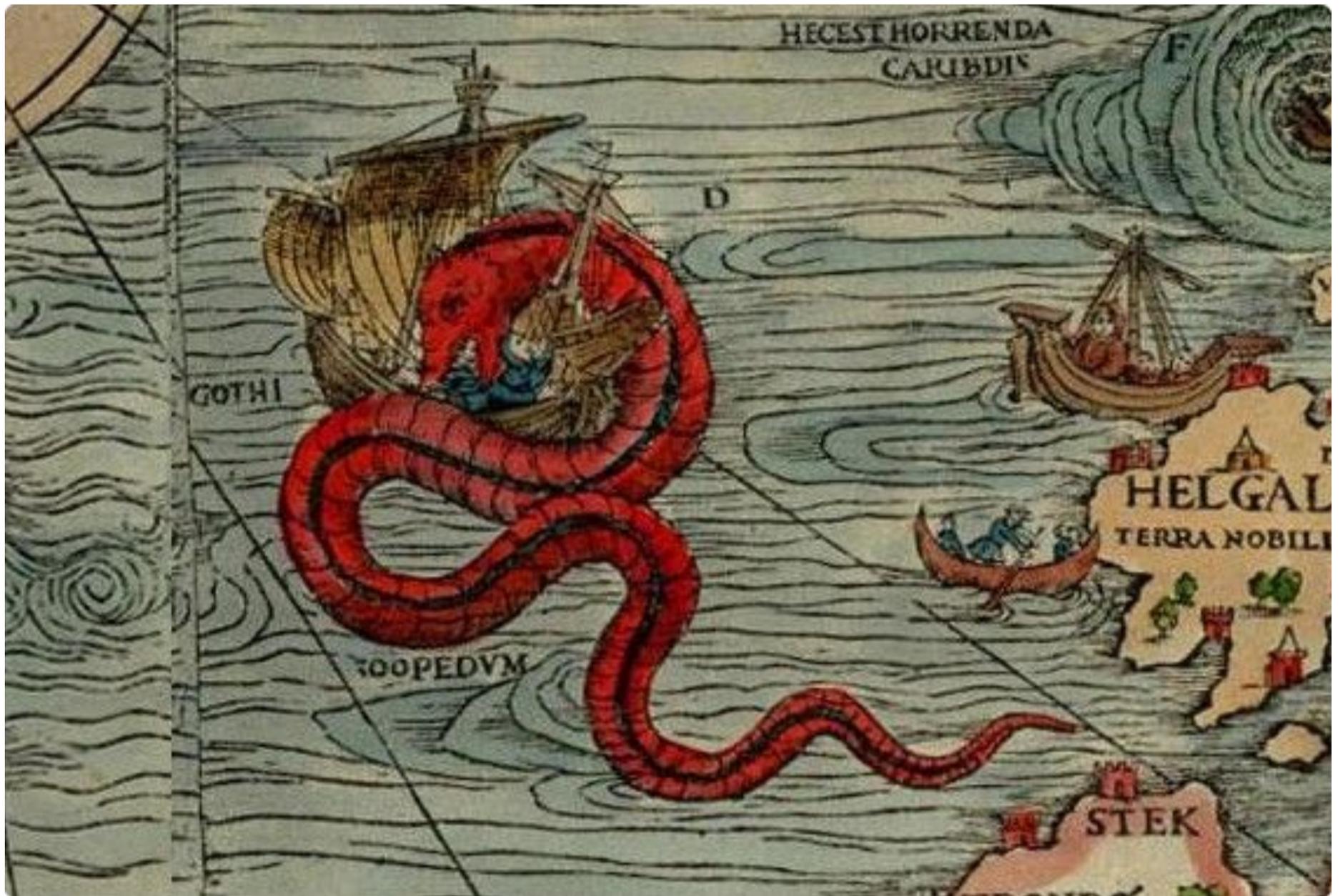


# The Metaverse Is A Mission Field



Photo source: "<https://www.archdaily.com/782818/cartography-in-the-metaverse-the-power-of-mapping-in-video-games>

## Here Be Dragons



“Here be dragons”. Ancient mapmakers would mark unexplored territories with monsters and dragons to indicate the dangers that await those who dare enter.

All things being equal, humans generally prefer the familiar, and resist or even fear the unknown. Digital technologies like the internet, social media and video games present a rapidly expanding unexplored territories wherein unknown dangers await.

As a church planter and pastor, as well as the founder of GivApp, a growing FinTech company focused exclusively on the Christian community, I regularly encounter fear, dismissiveness and even outright rejection to today’s digital advancements.

Many well meaning, faithful and astute Christians look at our modern menu of internet innovations and say, “There be dragons.” Their natural response is often a desire to flee to safety. “Isn’t what we have good enough” or “Can’t we just keep things the way they are” are common questions. And often with good reason.

And then there are the pioneers. The explorers and the risk takers who see those monsters and dragons on the map, and rather than experiencing fear, they are filled with wonder and curiosity of what could be

The Metaverse, Web 3.0 and cryptocurrencies are the new frontier. Like any unexplored territory, it will come with its fair share of risks and challenges.

Here's why the pioneers matter: what many have not yet realized is that the next iteration of digital technology will be profoundly different from anything that has come before, If Christians run away, or take a wait and see approach, we will miss the greatest opportunity of the next two or three generations to share and demonstrate the eternally transforming love of Christ to all people in all places.

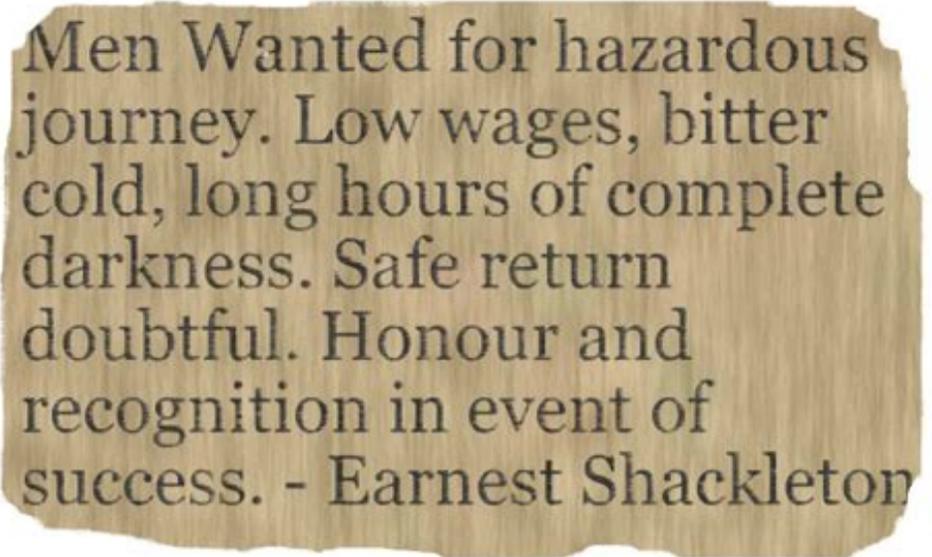
We cannot afford, the world cannot afford, your children and grandchildren cannot afford for Christians to ignore or run from this space.

***“We will miss the greatest opportunity of the next two or three generations to share and demonstrate the eternally transforming love of Christ to all people in all places.”***

My desire is to help believers begin to get their minds around what the Metaverse is. More than that though I hope to help others see why it matters so much and how we can participate in building and funding the tools and technologies that will shape the world in the years to come.

Thinking I would make part of my job simple, I looked up a definition for the Metaverse. This is what I found:

So, if you aren't quite sure, that's ok. Neither is anyone else.



Men Wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in event of success. - Ernest Shackleton



Here's a definition from J.P. Morgan that I like:

JP Morgan:

*The metaverse is a seamless convergence of our physical and digital lives, creating a unified, virtual community where we can work, play, relax, transact and socialize.*

In order to understand where this is going, we need to understand how we got here.

We are at the very beginning of the third major iteration. Some in this room will remember all three, others have barely remember life before the iPhone. For those of you who remember the internet in the early 90's these were the days of dial-up internet.

## Web 1.0

That was Web 1. Web 1 connected people to information at a scale that was previously inconceivable. We used to call the internet "the information superhighway".

It may surprise you to know there are many similarities between the early days of the internet and where we are today. Web 1 was unexplored territory. There was a steep learning curve. We couldn't conceive of how it would go mainstream. It just wasn't practical. Many people had no internet in their home. What we did have was slow. Adoption was very slow.

Like the metaverse, Web 1 definitely represented the unknown. Many were afraid of the impact it could have on culture. Would it have the power to bring out the worst in mankind,

those dragons within us? For most people it was hard to see the advantages. I distinctly remember people would say, "Yeah, I'm not getting that in my house. I'm fine with the way things are."

And then there were the pioneers who could see a once in a lifetime opportunity. This led to Ebay and Yahoo, Google and Amazon. All of which were started in the early and mid 90s. They were startups, not the tech giants that they've become today.

Web 1.0 was like the wild west of the internet age. It was wide open spaces, and new frontiers. And those with a vision, and a stomach for adventure, were the ones who would write and build the future.

# WEB 1.0

- Connected **people to information.**
- "The information superhighway"
- Steep learning curve
- Slow adoption
- No Tech Giants
- New Frontier
- **Decentralized**

## Web 2.0

If Web 1.0 was all about connecting us to information, Web 2.0 is about connecting people to people through the exchange of information. Web 2.0 arrived in the early 2000's with social media companies like MySpace and Facebook who began to build these online communities. It was made possible, among other things by high speed internet, wifi, smart phones and cloud computing.

# WEB 2.0

- Connecting **people to people** through shared information
- **Social Media**
- Minimal learning curve
- Fast adoption
- Rise of Tech Giants
- Developed
- **Centralized**

As a result, Web 2.0 also saw the growth of the tech giants and the centralization of the internet.

It also led to the user becoming the product.

That allows companies like TikTok, Snapchat and Twitter to provide their product for "free".

It's no secret that these companies provide us with a service and in exchange capture our data and use it for marketing, advertising and sales.

Have you ever had a conversation with someone about some topic, say backpacking or camping, and then you hop on instagram and there before you is an ad trying to sell you backpacks or tents? And there's nothing you can do about it.

That is the result of centralization. You own nothing. You have no say, yet you are now the product and your privacy is the cost.

## Web 3.0

If Web 2 is about connecting people to people through the exchange of information, Web 3 is all about growing connections and communities through digital, shared experiences.

Web 2.0 was made possible by smartphones, 5G and Cloud computing, in Web 3.0, one of the significant catalysts is cryptocurrency, which introduced, among other things, decentralized blockchain technology.

## Decentralization and Cryptocurrency

Let's talk about decentralization and cryptocurrency. While there are many cryptocurrencies, Bitcoin and Ethereum are the two biggest. But to understand how all of this got started, we've got to start with bitcoin.



Bitcoin was introduced to the world in 2009 as a peer to peer payment network. One of bitcoin's many important innovations is that it's not controlled by a central bank, like America's Federal Reserve, which tracks and manages the ledger for the US Dollar. Rather than being controlled by a central authority, Bitcoin is tracked and managed on a ledger that is distributed, or *decentralized*. This distributed ledger is the blockchain.

The bitcoin blockchain runs on tens of thousands of computers around the world and contains all the data for every transaction ever made with bitcoin. Other data can be stored on the blockchain as well.

There are many reasons why this matters, but for this discussion we need to know that this is the technology that allows for the creation of NFTs, which we'll talk about in a minute.



And then there's Ethereum. There are many nuanced differences between Ethereum and Bitcoin, but the very general description of bitcoin above is sufficient for the purposes of this paper.

# WEB 3.0

- Connecting people through shared experiences.
- Metaverse
- Steep learning curve
- Slow Adoption
- Community Ownership
- Next Frontier
- Decentralized

The reason Ethereum matters is because, due to some of its unique characteristics, the metaverse and the economy, aka the *metaconomy*, run on its blockchain.

## **NFTs and Community Ownership:**

Now that we have a basic understanding of cryptocurrency and decentralization, we can briefly tackle the topic of NFTs.

Believe it or not, these little apes represent a crucial part of the Web 3.0 ecosystem. You may have heard of the Bored Ape Yacht Club. You can pick up one of these guys for a few hundred grand, if you're lucky. If that doesn't make sense to you, understanding the value proposition of an NFT might help.



Bored Ape Yacht Club #2180

NFT stands for **non-fungible token**.

A good definition is: *A unique and noninterchangeable unit of data stored on a digital ledger like a blockchain.*

"Unique" is important. This is one the breakthroughs bitcoin introduced to the world, the ability to make a digital asset unique, or scarce.

In the past, if you wanted this little guy you would just right click and copy it. What crypto and the blockchain did was create a way to stamp this artwork to say, "this is THE one. The original." And like any artwork, there may be lots of copies, but there is only one original. This was not possible with digital assets prior to this technology.

In cryptocurrency, this problem was known as the double spend problem. It's akin to counterfeiting and was especially complicated with relation to digital currencies because of their ability to be perfectly copied.

***"NFT: A unique and noninterchangeable unit of data stored on a digital ledger like a blockchain."***

This is easy enough to understand. A digital photograph can be perfectly copied an infinite number of times, therefore it cannot have any real value because anyone can simply copy the image or asset. Well, it's the same with anything digital. What bitcoin solved was how to mark each digital asset as unique for all time.

When this technology gets applied to digital assets like photographs, digital artwork, videos, even text, you get an NFT.

The 'non interchangeable' in the definition relates to the "non fungible" part of NFTs. When something is fungible, it can be exchanged, as other items like it represent the same value.

If I give you a \$100 bill and you give me a \$100 bill, it doesn't matter. We both still have \$100 because dollars are fungible.

An NFT is unique and scarce and so every NFT has its own value, which is decided by the market. NFTs are one the most visible examples of digital ownership.

## **NFTs and the Metaverse:**

So what do NFTs have to do with the metaverse? NFTs are assets that are able to be owned, used, traded and sold within the metaverse. Any digital asset that can have utility can be made into an NFT and used in the metaverse.

Every piece of land and clothing and building material is an NFT. And just like land, lumber, bricks, mortar and glass in the physical world, these items are unique, limited in supply, and have utility and value in the metaverse. So everything that is bought and sold in the metaverse is an NFT. They are the building blocks of the metaconomy.

## **Metaverse:**

And now finally, the Metaverse. The Metaverse is really just a result of the blending of these technologies and innovations. When put together what you get is a 3 dimensional internet with a built in economy and currency, where users can engage in various expressions of community through shared experiences.

***Metaverse: "A three dimensional internet with a built in economy and currency, where users can engage in various expressions of community through shared experiences."***

One of the things I've noticed is how people talk about the metaverse. Today we say, "go to the internet" or "get on the internet", in the metaverse we would say, "go in, or into, the metaverse".

You can think of it like an embodied internet. Instead of looking at a website. You move around inside the website. This is where technologies like virtual and augmented reality come into play.

## **Virtual Reality:**

Virtual Reality is just that, a fully immersive virtual environment.

Our team at GivApp has 3 team meetings each week. Since one of our partners is in Dallas, historically we've done those meetings on Zoom. However, earlier this year we began doing one of those meetings in VR. We put on our headsets and meet in our virtual conference room. We've designed it the way we want with white boards, screen sharing, decorations and other features that give it a personalized feel. We even have a monitor inside our conference room where others can join us by video. They see us as our avatars and we see them just as you would see someone on a zoom call. While VR is not necessary for metaverse interaction, it has the effect of creating an environment that truly gives us a sense of being together.

***"VR has the effect of creating an environment that truly gives us a sense of being together."***

As I move to wrap this up, the aspect that makes Web 3 and the metaverse so different from our current technology is its aim to bring people together and to build communities through these shared experiences like concerts, digital travel, business meetings, hangouts, shopping, fundraisers and more.

GivApp has just purchased a piece of land in the Sandbox, one ecosystem of the metaverse and we're working on building a digital venue where we can host events and fundraisers for Christian nonprofits in ways never even conceived of before. And not only is it going to happen, it has the potential to change fundraising forever.

If you think that sounds far-fetched, recently a famous rapper had a concert in Fortnite, a metaverse-like game that is extremely popular among teens. Over 27 million people attended live. Last week I asked my kids and my nephews if they knew about it. Their answer, "We were there."

And this is exactly why Christians must participate and build in this space. Unlike the imperfect and anemic community of Web 2, Web 3 and the metaverse will close the loop. And as Christians, we are people of community. God made us for community. To ignore or reject the metaverse because of the digital components is not dissimilar from rejecting a people group because we don't understand them, or we don't like the way they do things. To anyone with a biblical missiology, that would be unthinkable.

## **Conclusion:**

At the end of it all, as Christians, the reason that we do anything is out of obedience and faithfulness to Christ. Jesus was nothing if not a pioneer. In fact, Hebrews 12:2 says this:

***“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”***

He looked to the earth, and he saw the dragons of sin in your heart and in mine. The same dragons that would ultimately crucify him. But he did not turn away in fear. He did not decide to just keep things the way they were. Rather he left the comforts of heaven to come to us.

But he did not come as a mere explorer or adventurer. He came as a conqueror and a King. On the cross he defeated those dragons so that you and I might live in power of his cross, having nothing to fear, but rather with boldness we are able to fulfill our mandates to subdue and rule over creation through our work. And to take the gospel to all creation through our words and actions. That creation must include the metaverse.

*This article has been taken from a presentation given by Jason Hunsucker, Founder/CEO of GivApp, at the 2022 Lion's Den DFW conference in Dallas TX. For more resources on this topic visit [www.givapp.com/resources](http://www.givapp.com/resources).*

