

7th Day Rest E13 Final

Lord of the Sabbath

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Jon: Hey, this is Jon at The Bible Project. Today on the podcast, we're going to continue a discussion about a theme in the Bible. It's a beautiful and big theme that we're calling 7th Day Rest. It's the idea that all of history is culminating in a time where humans and God can rule together on earth in rest and peace. It's why the Jewish people have celebrated the Sabbath (a stop day) to recognize that this reality is coming. And it's the heartbeat behind all of the festivals in the Jewish calendar.

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Last week, we began talking about Jesus and how he is the climax of this theme of 7th Day Rest. Jesus started his ministry on the Sabbath day, reading from the scroll of Isaiah, and saying the ultimate Sabbath, the ultimate Jubilee would come with him, where slaves are set free and debts are forgiven. After this announcement, he begins to go out and perform miracles. In this episode, we're going to discuss another claim that Jesus made that ties into the theme of 7th Day Rest. And it's found in Matthew 12, where Jesus calls himself the "Lord of the Sabbath."

Tim: His last line is "for the son of Adam is the Lord of the Sabbath." The truly human one that the whole storyline of the Hebrew Bible is pointing to. He's claiming that he is the one who will provide the rest. He's the human to which the storyline of the Torah I was appointing, who will lead God's people towards the ultimate Jubilee. We're getting into the scandal that Jesus represented, which was an offering and an alternative religion. It was saying he was bringing the whole storyline of the Scriptures and their tradition to its fulfillment. So you had to go through him.

Jon: For Jesus go around and call himself the "Lord of the Sabbath," I mean, that sounds pretty scandalous. Because if it's true, what does that mean for the sacred ritual of the Sabbath?

Tim: This became a pressing matter once the Jesus movement became multi-ethnic. Paul moves right towards this very issue in Romans 14.

Jon: I'm Jon Collins, and today I talk with Tim about Jesus' claim that he's Lord of the Sabbath, what it means, and how Paul handles the question of Sabbath celebration to a non-Jewish Christian audience. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

We are on the home stretch in this conversation on the eternal rest.

Tim: Eternal rest.

Tim: Here is another phrase we haven't used.

Tim: No, that's right.

Jon: That's kind of more from my childhood.

Tim: And it's a good one. The rest. The idea of across the Jordan is the promised rest for God's people. Jesus is baptized in the Jordan and goes to his hometown after a tour in the wilderness and then says, "Yeah, the ultimate Sabbath has arrived. I'm doing it." We're talking about Jesus' announcement of the ultimate Sabbath, which he also calls the reign of God, the kingdom of God.

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Jon: The rule of God.

Tim: The place and time and people over which God rule is realized and embodied.

Jon: The way it was meant to be, which is this Genesis 1 and 2 image of a rule that is abundant that you don't have to slave in order to get to it. It arrives kind of in its own way and in a way that's abundant and it gets to cooperate with. There's plenty. So Jesus is saying that that's happening with him? The Sabbath Jubilee rest is starting.

Tim: He's bringing it into reality as he goes about announcing the release from sin and death to the people of Israel. And then he actually starts bringing it about as he heals people and creates communities where people can trust that they're forgiven by God and included in God's family to rest and enjoy the party.

Jon: Either you're doing Sabbath rest or you're a slave to the decay and death. They're mutually exclusive states. And you got to be liberated from one into the other.

Tim: That's right. Jesus was not offering an alternative to what some people call the religion of Judaism. He is here to bring Christianity. The whole storyline of the Jewish scriptures is about God's mission to restore the nations in his world to the ultimate rest. That was the culmination of Genesis 1. And so Jesus is saying, "That's the thing that we've all been waiting for is here, and I'm the one doing it."

We talked about his announcement. We talked about his bringing about that rest in people often on the Sabbath. He'd go somewhere on the Sabbath, and hell somebody. And that starts earning him some enemies. Again, not because he broke the Sabbath, but because he's claiming to be the one bringing God's eternal Sabbath into the present.

Jon: He's not anymore, like, say, "Hey, we should practice the Sabbath so that one day it can become reality." He's saying, "Hey, we're living in the Sabbath now because I'm here. I'm making it happen."

Tim: The thing to which Sabbath pointed all along is happening.

Jon: It's happening.

Tim: It's the difference like when the sun rises and shines into your living room, and so you don't need to have your lamps on. It's not that your lamps are wrong, it's just they become...

Jon: Unnecessary.

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Tim: They don't become needed in the same way. Now, this is a good lead-in. Whatever metaphor you choose, the point is, is when you're anticipating something, you might develop practices that help you remember and hope for the thing that you're waiting for. And then once the thing happens or comes, those practices change in their role in necessity because the thing is here.

There's a similar dynamic at work here. In fact, we're going to look at Matthew 11 and 12 and see some interesting things drawn together here about Jesus' concept of rest and the Sabbath.

[00:07:30]

Tim: Matthew 11 and 12 are key chapters. The arc of Chpts. 1-4 is the birth stories and then Jesus passing the test being tested by the Satan. Then he arrives at the end of Chpt. 4 announcing the good news of God's kingdom, preaching and teaching about the kingdom and healing. Then Matthew gives you the Sermon on the Mount, you get the preaching and teaching of the kingdom.

Then, after the Sermon on the Mount to get Matthew 8 and 9 and he's assembled nine stories of Jesus performing healing or doing something mighty to heal or rescue people ten times in nine stories. It's exactly is Jesus teaching the kingdom and it's Jesus bringing in the kingdom in signs and wonders.

Then Matthew has packed into Chpts. 11 and 12, after Jesus has done that, all of the controversy and negative responses of Israel's leaders. His own cousin, John the Baptist is like, "You're the guy. Why am I in prison?" Right in the middle of these two chapters, Matthew 11 and 12 have of all these different people with mixed responses to Jesus. Mostly negative. Right in the middle, we get a little window into Jesus' prayer life on a given day. Here's what he prays. Do you want to say it?

Jon: "At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. "Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight." All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." I didn't realize that was all part of a prayer.

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Tim: Jesus starts talking to the Father. You're right. Actually, once he starts saying, "Come to me, all you who were weary..." he's addressing a crowd.

Jon: Seems like in vs. 27 he stops addressing the Father and he starts addressing...

Tim: Oh, I see. Yeah, you got it.

Jon: He starts talking about the father in the third person.

Tim: "Yes, Father, this was pleasing in your sight." Vs 27, he starts talking about the Father in third person. But it's this just packed little speech by Jesus. No audience is marked in terms of like who he's talking to. He's just praying and then he just starts talking into a group of unmarked people. It's an interesting narrative technique. It's as if it represents Jesus' response to the situation and then sharing with his disciples in some way. It's interesting.

In context, he's just had a whole bunch of people reject him or question him, try to humiliate him in public, and he calls them "the wise and intelligent that God has hidden the truth from." This is so Hebrew Bible.

Jon: He's being nice.

Tim: God loves to upset the normal the power structures and elevate the people who are insignificant and keep the people who think they're significant in the dark. So he calls babies. That's what he calls his followers.

Jon: Infants.

Tim: Infants. We're like children in the eyes of this little ragtag group touring around Galilee...

Jon: What do they know?

Tim: ...saying, "God's kingdom is here." And they'd feed people and he's a magician, and heal some sick people. And they think God's kingdom has shown up.

Jon: They're babbling like toddlers.

Tim: Totally. And Jesus says exactly the opposite. Vs. 26, "This was pleasing in your sight. You love to turn upside down the conventional ways that humans do things." Vs. 27 sounds like a statement of Jesus from the Gospel of John. "All things are handed to me by my Father." That's the Son of Man language right there. All things are given over to the Son by

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the Father. And then he ratchets it up. "In fact, no one actually even knows God except through the way I am opening up the true heart be of the father." That's a tall claim. You can see it just stacking here of like the claims just keep getting intense and intense. Then these famous lines that are easy to take out of this context. And people have often puzzled even what do they mean in this context.

Jon: It almost feels like they were pasted in here.

Tim: After this claim, that in him the God whose story is told in the Hebrew Scripture is creator, his father uniquely revealed through me," Jesus says. "Therefore, everybody who's heavy laden, who's tired, and just carries burden on your backs, I will give you rest." And then this image of a yoke.

Jon: Which is the instrument an ox wears to work with another ox to plow fields.

Tim: That's right. I think it implied here is you have another yoke.

Jon: You're already yoked.

Tim: You're are already. Everybody's under a yoke, but you take the yoke and you'll find that this yoke actually is light.

Jon: It's not heavy.

Tim: It's not heavy. Certainly inversion of a metaphor. I mean yolks are heavy, but they're also meant to make your burden less heavy.

Jon: Work be easier. You're sharing the load of someone else.

Tim: Yeah, sharing. And it distributes the weight across your shoulders. If I have a backpack on and it's all on one strap, my shoulder will get sore. But if it's two straps...

Jon: And then you get those backpacks that then put the weight on the waist.

Tim: It distributes the weight. You carry it in your core. His point is "my yoke is more ergonomic." And then the twice repeated "rest." I'll give you rest.

Jon: Yeah, it's interesting. Yokes are made for working. His yoke is made for rest.

Tim: When you work with me leading you, you'll find that your work is paradoxically...

[crosstalk 00:13:54]

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Jon: You let me disperse burdens the way they're supposed to be dispersed, and you'll find that you're not actually plowing the field, you're the resting.

Tim: Your work is done from a place of rest.

Jon: Do you think that's what it is - your work is done from place rest? You will rest. I will give you rest.

Tim: I will give you rest.

Jon: We talked about this a lot in terms of what's the difference between "work" and "rest," right?

Tim: That's right. Yeah, that's right.

Jon: When work is joyful, it feels playful.

Tim: The image of what does working the garden...God puts the human in the garden to work.

Jon: It's a difference between working in a garden that, man, day in and day out you're just trying to get it to cooperate, and it's always fighting against you versus working in a garden where you turn around, you're like, "Whoa, where did that thing come from? Look at that beautiful vine." It's like a playful kind of gardening.

Tim: This is back to - I think we quoted from him - this Italian scholar, Samuele Bacchiocchi. He's got another really influential essay on this passage in Matthew called "Matthew 11: Jesus' Rest and the Sabbath." Because Matthew has placed two stories about Jesus having controversies about the Sabbath right after the same in Matthew 12. It was certainly on purpose.

Jon: It's on the mind.

Tim: He's inviting people to rest, and then there are two stories of how Jesus announced the Sabbath being fulfilled. This phrase "coming under a yoke" or "the yoke of a rabbi," this is like a fixed phrase in Jewish culture.

Jon: It's an idiom?

Tim: Yeah. He explores that. He says, "The metaphor of the yoke was commonly used to express subordination and loyalty to God, especially through obedience to the Torah. Jeremiah speaks of the leaders of Israel who knew the Torah of their God but they all alike had broken the yoke and had burst the bonds." That's Jeremiah 5:5.

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Jon: Obeying the law is a type of yoke. That's the metaphor.

Tim: Correct. The laws of the Torah, being faithful to them, it's like a yoke. Later on, in chapter 6, Jeremiah says, find rest for your souls, i.e. by learning a new obedience to the laws of Torah. In Jeremiah 5 and 6, bursting the yoke is disobedience to the covenant laws and therefore finding rest by being faithful to the covenant...You can see there's the image here. Taking God's yoke offered in terms of the covenant will actually be their way...In the narrative, it's their way to find rest in the promised land.

Jon: Do these things and you will be blessed.

Tim: "Don't eat of the tree of knowing good and evil and it's going to be awesome here.

Jon: You got a lot of trees to eat from. Every other one. They're producing for you.

Tim: The command is the yoke that actually helps guide you into your rest. Samuele Bacchiocchi goes on. He says, "The rabbis often spoke of the yoke of the Torah or they even call it the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, or the yoke of the commandments, or the yoke of God. Rabbi Nehunya ben HaKana, who died around 70 AD is reported to have said, "He who takes upon himself the yoke of the Torah, from him shall be taken away the yoke of the kingdom and the yoke of worldly care." He goes on, "What this means is that devotion to the Torah and its interpretation frees a person from the troubles and cares of the world."

Jon: And that's kind of what Proverbs is all about too in a way.

Tim: Sure.

Jon: Live by God's wisdom and things will go well for you.

Tim: There's even Proverbs that are about finding rest in the land and long life. All that. The Proverbs package deal is a kind of Sabbath rest or a little taste of it. What seems like what Jesus is doing...Actually, this is great. I'll just keep reading from Bacchiocchi because he has a good way of putting it. He says, "Matthew is setting forth the yoke of the Messiah not as a commitment to a new Torah, but as dedication to a person who is the interpreter and fulfiller of the Torah and prophets. The emphasis on the person is self-evident in the saying, 'Come to me, take my yoke, learn from me, I will give you rest.'" That's an interesting way of putting it I think.

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Jon: Yeah. Because a rabbi would typically say, "Come to the Torah, listen to the Torah, learn from the Torah, it will give you rest." And Jesus is making it very personal to him. Not because he's trying to take you away from the laws of God, but he's saying all of this is coming to fulfillment in me.

Tim: That's right. In a way, what he's saying here about the yoke then is another way of thinking about his statement in the Sermon on the Mount. "I didn't come to negate the Torah. Rather, I came to fulfill the Torah and the prophets." That's what he says. Here, if you come under my teaching, you will find the true way to rest in the promised land. He's offering himself and his inauguration of the Jubilee as the true way towards Israel's arrest in the land.

Jon: Jesus thinks very highly of himself.

Tim: He does. Now it makes sense why this saying about "I'll give you rest" is next to a statement of saying no one knows God, the God of Israel, except me and the one that I revealed to you."

Jon: That's interesting. Like you can't just go to the Torah and find the true rest. You need to see it through Jesus. Is that kind of what he saying?

Tim: Well, I think his point is that the Torah is about him. He's claiming that he is the one who will provide the rest. He's the human to which the storyline of the Torah was pointing, who will lead God's people towards the ultimate Jubilee.

Jon: Because the Torah has laws but mostly it's a story.

Tim: But Israel's sitting in exile because nobody was faithful to the Torah. That's right. We're getting into the scandal that Jesus represented, which wasn't offering an alternative religion. It was saying he was bringing the whole storyline of the Scriptures and their tradition to its fulfillment. So you had to go through him. "I will give you rest. Take my yoke."

The next story after these words is how the Pharisees just can't take it. They just can't take it.

Jon: I mean, it's really...

Tim: It's gutsy.

Jon: Totally. If you don't already come with a presupposition of Jesus is who He says He is, this all sounds really narcissistic.

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Tim: Yeah, sure. I've encountered people who are reading the Gospels brand new who get that impression of some sayings of Jesus.

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Tim: Here's the next story right after Jesus does that. "At that time Jesus went through some grain fields on the Sabbath. Now his disciples became hungry..." Let's pause. I'm hungry on the Sabbath.

Jon: Been at work.

Tim: Think through the manna in the wilderness.

Jon: God will provide.

Tim: Yeah, God will provide. And Jesus is like, "Yeah, God will provide that grain that's right beside you." His disciples became hungry and they just started to pick heads of grain right there. It's like they're in a garden on Shabbat.

Jon: They're in the garden and they can just pick what they want.

Tim: Are we meant to hear echoes here of the laws? Remember in the seventh year of release, leave your fields and let the poor, the immigrant, and the wild animals eat from the field. Are they trying to pull a poor exemption here? "When the Pharisees saw this, they looked at him and says, "What? Your disciples are not honoring the Sabbath."

Jon: You're harvesting on the Sabbath.

Tim: Yeah, it's a kind of harvesting. Which we talked about this in the last bit. This is a little crack. Pretty small. It feels like they're nitpicking. But remember the person who they're nitpicking with just claim to be the embodiment, the revealer of the true God of Israel.

Jon: So you better live consistently. Obeying the Sabbath is so important that there's a lot of guidelines around it. There's no reason to be breaking these guidelines unless you just don't believe in the Sabbath.

Tim: Once again, this is Jesus. He's not breaking the Sabbath or saying it's bad. Here's what he says. He says, "Have you read the Bible, Bible experts, what David did when he was hungry, he and his companions? He went into the house of God and they ate the holy bread, like the bread of the presence."

Jon: It is the showbread. Twelve loaves.

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- Tim: Twelve loaves changed out every Shabbat. So David went and eats the bread and that's not lawful. Nobody's supposed to eat that bread.
- Jon: That's a sacred symbol.
- Tim: But it's only for the priests alone. Let's pause right there.
- Jon: Did the priests eat it or they just change it up?
- Tim: They could change it up. I forget. It may not have said there whether they can eat it. It just assumes they can eat okay. It's a week old bread.
- Jon: Good for you if you want to eat it.
- Tim: Seven days, some stale bread. We've talked about this passage, I feel like in recent memory, in the Son of Man.
- Jon: Was it Son of Man?
- Tim: Yeah, because the punchline of the whole story is, "I'm the son of man." That's right. That's when we did. Just remember Jesus is creating a little parallel scenario here telling the story about David. He's quoting a story from when David was fleeing from King Saul, who Israel thought was still their king but in God's eyes, he was an illegitimate King. David's the real King, but he kept undercover until God exalted Him. Jesus is putting himself in the place of Israel's true but unrecognized king.
- Jon: Yeah. They weren't angry enough.
- Tim: Yeah, totally. He's putting them in the Slavs Saul, the illegitimate king.
- Jon: Chasing him.
- Tim: And then he puts himself in the place of going into the temple, and just acting like he's a priest.
- Jon: And if the garden is an image of the temple, Adam and Eve are the first priests.
- Tim: Are the first royal priests. They are priests who rule.
- Jon: That's the point of the Sabbath is to remember and celebrate that thing that was lost and needs to happen again.
- Tim: That's right. Let's keep going. It gets better. He says, "Or maybe you've read the Torah, you guys, you know that on Shabbat, on the Sabbath, priests are in the temple breaking the Sabbath, and they're innocent. I mean, they're working all day long. Sacrificing animals, cleaning up. It's a

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long day of work for priests on the Sabbath. And you know what's interesting? God's totally fine with that. Because they're in the little micro Eden doing their priestly duties." This is all about Adam and Eve as the Royal priests. The true humanity in the garden...

Jon: To be the human priests in the cosmic temple is a type of work, but it's a Sabbath work.

Tim: Yes. In fact, I was just thinking this. You've asked this multiple points, these images of what is the non-slavery to death kind of work that's the garden? And Jesus, in a way he's addressing that very issue right there.

Jon: It's the priest doing sacrifices in the temple. That's a non-slavery type of work.

Tim: So work that is a kind of rest because you're in the presence of God, honoring Him. I mean, the sacrifices are all about "Thank you for everything you give us. We give back to you this. These animals ascend in smoke as representatives of our gifts, and our love, and our honor to you." So he says, "Listen, the priests work all day on Shabbat in the temple and God's fine with that." And then vs. 6, "And I tell you one greater than the temple is here."

David planned for designing the temple, his son built it, the priests work in it. And then Jesus is like, "And I am the reality to which the temple was pointing." And then you just have to go ponder, "Okay, what did the temple point to? What does it mean to say something like that?"

Jon: We're combining so many themes here.

Tim: Yeah, we are. Huh? Jesus...

Jon: The temple theme...Yeah, sorry. Jesus is the temple but the temple is also all of creation. Those are both happening. So for Jesus say "Something greater than the temple is here. That's me," the temple was pointing towards when God dwelt in the presence of human.

Tim: The seventh day.

Jon: And that is the seventh day. Jesus walking around is a perpetual Sabbath. Jesus thought of his whole life as a Sabbath.

Tim: Yes. At least since he launched the kingdom.

Jon: It's like, "This is all Sabbath."

Tim: It's all as Jubilee. The year of God's favor.

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Jon: And whether I'm doing on the Sabbath or not anything I do is Sabbath activity. Do you think he thought that - "everything I do is Sabbath activity"?

Tim: Well, you know they're walking on a road and apparently he thinks of picking grain as like Adam and Eve in the garden, which is what the temple and the priests and David all represent. It seems like it. He believed he was in the Garden of Eden.

Jon: This happens to be on a Sabbath.

Tim: Yeah, right. What better day to better day to play-act?

Jon: But he's not play-acting.

Tim: Exactly. He's claiming that it's the reality. This last line is: "For the son of Adam is the Lord of the Sabbath. The ultimate son of Adam, the truly human one that the whole storyline of the Hebrew Bible is pointing to, the one who's exalted to sharing God's identity and rule in Daniel 7. All that. The ideal New Eden is what God installs the new Adam over. And that's who I am."

Jon: I see. That ideal needs to have a ruler, someone who's...that's the setting for some of the reign. And it's Adam and Eve in partnership with God in Genesis 2, and then it's humanity realizing, "we just can't do this," and there's just hope for like, "Well, there will be a human who can do it, and he will invite everyone back into that. And he will be the one that truly reigns and rules in the setting of the eternal rest (the eternal Sabbath.)"

Tim: It's taken me so long to learn how to read the Bible. But the way that the Garden of Eden story underlies everything, and so whether Jesus is talking about David, the priests or the temple or the Son of Man or the Sabbath, all of those are just later design patterns mapped back on. And so he can pick any of them and say "it was all leading to me."

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Tim: What do you say about Jesus in the Sabbath? There's a lot of stories about Sabbath controversies. It was a regular point of contention. Some people have characterized it as Jesus kind of played loose with the Sabbath or he's flouting traditions—dismissing the practice of the tradition. I think it's because they merge how Paul's trying to deal with Sabbath in his context.

Jon: Which is a Gentile context.

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- Tim: The Gentile Jew context, yeah. And it's just different than what Jesus is doing. This is just classic how Jesus talks about the Hebrew Scriptures in all the seven, the days in the calendar. It's all pointing to something that he's bringing into reality. To say that the Sabbath, the Jubilee is here and the Son of Man is greater than the temple or Lord of the Sabbath is the same basic thing as saying "the kingdom of God is here through me." It's all different ways of getting in the same reality.
- Jon: Jesus sees himself as inaugurating this cosmic release sin and death. And what we haven't talked about is how there's a paradox even there in terms of in what way is he doing that? He hasn't done it fully. People are still sick, there's still work, that sucks, but he is doing it in a way that is practical and real. People are being healed, sins are being forgiven. And this is all leading up to his cosmic confrontation with the powers of evil and darkness for another battle.
- Tim: Yes. But don't forget the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is about imagining a new way of human communities that in theory, if people really live this way, will find their life together a little bit more like a place of safety and rest with each other. If people live by the Sermon on the Mount, that's a big condition.
- Jon: Pretty massive condition.
- Tim: But if that's the part of the yoke of Jesus, "Take my yoke and find rest," part of tasting that future rest in the present and living under God's kingdom in the present...
- Jon: It's a way to find rest now.
- Tim: Correct.
- Jon: It's a way for eternal life to begin now.
- Tim: It's partial because I'll fail at it, and so is my neighbor, but it's a better way forward than any other I know.
- Jon: The alternative. Mine's will get started.
- Tim: Why do we still read the Sermon on the Mount today and find it just as fresh of an ethical challenge as it was 2,000 years ago? It's power powerful stuff.
- Jon: Maybe then another way to think about is if the Sabbath is a day in which to enact this beautiful rest and rule that is the ultimate hope. And not only the Sabbath, but then all these feast days. Jubilee, all that stuff. One way to think about is it doesn't go far enough one day.

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Tim: Oh, yeah. Interesting.

Jon: Jesus, when he gives the Beatitudes, it's like, "Here's a way of life," which means you have to kind of have this radical trust that the Sabbath was helping us do, but it's now going to be just the way that we live today.

Tim: In a way, what Jesus is doing is super honoring the Sabbath. It's like magnifying it so that all of a sudden every day I look at through the lens of the Sabbath. Every day, set aside every moment an opportunity to live out of abundance so that I share with others and love my neighbor. That's a good way of putting it.

Jon: If that's true then, how would Jesus then think about the actual Sabbath? Just another day like any other or is something still special during this time in which the ultimate Sabbath rest hasn't fully been?

Tim: That's a good question. I mean, he keeps going to synagogue on Shabbat throughout the gospels. It's just that what he does brings him into conflict with certain leaders' perception of what should or shouldn't be done on the Sabbath. But yeah, that's interesting. Your point is, did he devalue the actual seventh day (what we call Friday night, Saturday night) if every day is like that? It doesn't seem that way.

Jon: He's super valuing the concept of the Sabbath and the theme of the Sabbath and the hope of the Sabbath. And by doing that, it almost seems like he's devaluing one day...

Tim: That's interesting.

Jon: ...from one perspective.

Tim: I got it. The leaders of Israel don't challenge him in that way. The debates are about what's acceptable type of practice on the Sabbath. They assumed the thing is Jesus does the Sabbath and so do we. What's the proper way to honor it? I agree. That seems logical Jesus devaluing the actual Sabbath day. But he doesn't seem to have bothered. People didn't seem to draw that conclusion when he was doing. People began to draw that conclusion from what Paul was saying and doing.

Jon: We'll get to Paul I'm imagining.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: At this moment, I don't have any other important reflections to offer. You've now planted that question in my mind. I think I have touched on

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all the relevant Sabbath types of stories, and they're about what he does on the Sabbath, not that he devalues it in any way. That becomes a major issue once the Jesus movement...

Jon: Not that I'm saying he devalues it. But if he's saying that the thing that the Sabbath pointed to is happening...

Tim: Id here and it permeates every day...

Jon: ...and it permeates every day, then the point of the ritual has to change. This is the thing you...

Tim: Yeah, you don't need your lamp in your living room when the sun rises.

Jon: It doesn't mean you have to dishonor the lamp.

Tim: It changes its purpose. Its purpose changes.

Jon: Its purpose changes. That's where the lamp metaphor kind of falls apart a little bit, I don't know because you don't need the lamp at that point. You might as well throw it away. But Jesus didn't throw it away at Sabbath.

Tim: But maybe the lamps is heirloom. And it reminds you of your grandma and how she took you on walk in the park. It actually helps you appreciate the sun because it reminds you of your grandma who took you on walks. Actually, what I'm thinking about now is this became a pressing matter once the Jesus movement became multiethnic. Paul moves right towards this very issue in Romans 14.

[00:38:21]

Tim: Romans 14, Paul's writing a letter to the church in Rome. He's never been there.

Jon: No.

Tim: He has lots of people he knows there because he's widely networked by this point in his career. There's some debate here among scholars. The most likely scenario he's writing to a network of house churches in Rome divided along ethnic lines of Jew and non-Jew. Jews were expelled from Rome.

Jon: Oh, really? I didn't know that.

Tim: Yeah, by...I always get my details wrong. There was an emperor who expelled Jews from Rome. They were let back in a few years later. And you can just imagine a ripe scenario.

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Jon: Claudius?

Tim: Yeah, I thought it was Claudius, but I always mistake him for also doing other things too. There are a few Roman historians who talk about it. One of whom talks about how Jews were connected to disturbances about certain crystals. And so some people wonder if that you know...The kind of things that followed Paul around is disputes and quarrels or riots...

Jon: Civilism.

Tim: ...if something was happening that put the Romans governors on authority be like, "Not cool." In the Roman capital, the Jews are causing more problems. The decade is leading up to the Jewish war against Rome over in Judea. So the Jewish people are already on not the favorite list throughout the Empire. Jews were expelled from Rome. That gives you a number of years for non-Jewish churches to just keep cruising. And by churches 30 to 40 people in the house church and a network of maybe, maybe, a couple of hundred people. Probably less. Total. Five house churches.

Jon: No Jews.

Tim: Yeah, there was no Jews for a number of years. A bunch comes back and there's tension because all of a sudden, nobody's been doing any of the Jewish customs anymore. And then they come back in Messianic Jews, and we come to the Jesus meal, and there's non-kosher food everywhere. That's a bummer. That's not awesome.

Jon: "You guys forgot where you came from."

Tim: There's some friction that you can see why Romans 14 and 15 had to be written. One group, he calls the strong and the dunitas, the ones who were able. And then another group he calls the weak. It's clear even in the terms he uses, Paul has his own view on the matter in terms of which side of this debate he operates on.

Jon: Because the strong ones are the ones in his mind that don't need the rituals?

Tim: Yeah. That don't eat kosher and that don't observe Shabbat. But his nonnegotiable is there's room for all of us in the family and the Messiah. The one thing that's not acceptable is that you'll exclude each other from this family based on those issues. He won't tolerate that.

He says, "Except the one who are weak, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his views. One person thinks, "Hey, I don't need to eat kosher God made all of it." Another person, he comes to the house

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church and he sees some slices of ham along with beef and he's like, "I'm not going to eat from that tray. Vegetables only." The one who eats shouldn't regard with contempt the one who doesn't eat. And the one who doesn't eat shouldn't judge the one who does, for God accepts both. You can see kosher food is like at the center here.

Jon: Then sacred days.

Tim: But then sacred days. What verse are you?

Jon: Vs. 5.

Tim: "One person regards one day above another, another regards every day the same." Now that's interesting. That last phrase takes on a different tone if you think of...

Jon: Oh, if every day is a Sabbath?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Most people don't live that way. Most people think of every day like we're just living in the age of sin and death. And the Sabbath wakes you up to the fact that there's more to life.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: But what if you lived life like if age of sin death was passing and you're living?

Tim: My hunch is that if he's writing to Christians in Rome who were mostly non-Jewish, it is probably more people like me, who had I didn't grow up with any of those rhythms. For me actually, setting aside a 24 hour period and embodying any of this would be a real step forward.

Jon: Yeah, right. Because it wasn't weekends.

Tim: You know, I haven't done homework on what was the Roman work week like and who gets weekends or vacations. There you go. I don't know.

Jon: But each day is the same. Every day feels the same.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: There isn't a day of rest.

Tim: For sure if he doesn't say Shabbat but for sure that's what he's talking about. "He who observes a day observed it for the Lord. Just like the one who eats does so to the Lord. He's giving thanks to God. And the one

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who doesn't eat, give thanks to God." He goes on: "For none of us lives only for himself. We're a community that lives for one another. No one dies for themselves. If we live, we live for the Lord. If we die, we die to the Lord." So whether you live or die, we're the Lord's. Paul in logic right there. "Why do you judge your brother? Why do you regard each other with contempt? We're all equal members of this family, we all have to give an account to God. So don't put obstacles in front of each other."

From the point of view of non-Jewish Christians, this is the reasoning of Paul that made the Jesus movement available to them. For some Messianic Jews, this was great. They were thrilled about all of this. And for others, they were really bummed about this. That's remained a contention for 2,000 years now.

Jon: It's interesting, as you continue Paul's logic here, he gets back to kosher food. And then his kind of solve is the strongest serve the weak.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. He turns upside down.

Jon: Yeah, you're stronger because you could eat whatever you want, but hey, if it's making trouble, then don't do it.

Tim: That's right. That's totally the Jesus' redefinition of rank is. The people who would normally be in a socially superior role, because I have less scruples or issues about more freedom is the one who makes themselves more a servant to their neighbor to put them...Yeah, totally. That's exactly right.

"Because the kingdom of God," vs. 17, "isn't food or drink...righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." In a way, Shabbat is about food and drink in terms of abundance, but not in this way, in a way that ends up elevating rituals about food or drink. The point is we come together to celebrate and righteousness peace and joy.

Jon: Those are the things to fight for. Not what kind of food you're going to eat or in what way you're going to rest.

Tim: Notice eating kosher is not a debate activated in the gospels except maybe in one story in the story about washing your hands or purity that Jesus goes. Circumcision and eating kosher was major in the early church.

Jon: Right. Clear delineations of whether you're Jewish or not.

Tim: That's right. It's a different set of issues than what's at work in the Gospels which is inter Jewish debate about how the Sabbath is meant to be honored and ultimately fulfilled. It's helpful to distinguish those two.

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Jon: Does Paul ever talk to a Gentile audience in any of his letters and talk about rest in a way that helps you understand his perspective on how Sabbath culminates should be thought of?

Tim: Yeah, his letter to the Colossian. There was some kind of influence group in the city of Colossi that Paul's responding to when he writes this letter. People have debated endlessly what exactly was the profile of the teaching. Because it's definitely some kind of Jewish movement. Because he talks about new moons and Sabbath's and the festivals. But then he also uses other languages that some people think doesn't sound like a Jewish.

Jon: Purely Jewish.

Tim: Yeah. To be honest, when I last worked through Colossians, it sounded to me like some people from the Qumran community ended up in Colossae. I don't know. Actually, I'm just saying, Paul defines people who are ascetics so they've withdrawn, separatists, they super rigorous diet of food, they treat their bodies harshly, which asceticism is perceived that way. But they're super into the festivals, Newman, and Sabbath. And the "worship of the angels" is a phrase he uses in Colossians 2:18.

Some people used to think what that meant was worshipping angels. Then people thought, "Oh, is this a Greek, like a synchronistic pagan religion you're worshipping minor deities and that kind of thing? But dude, the Qumran community, their whole liturgy...

Jon: It's like joining the angels?

Tim:was about joining in the Liturgy of the angels. So the worship of the angels isn't worshipping angels. It's worshipping God with the angel.

Jon: Who are the ultimate choir.

Tim: Correct. It's like joining the ultimate choir. You know what? That's just like what's happening in the book of Revelation when John sees into the heavenly throne room and the angels are worshipping, and then the multitude joins him. But what Paul doesn't want them to do is get drawn into hyper speculation about these angels and contacting them. Again, read the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were really into their angels. For Paul, what he says is - This is Colossians 2:16-17 - "Let no one act as your judge with regard to food or drink, festival, new moon, and Sabbath." That sounds like Romans 14.

Jon: Yeah.

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Tim: "For these things are a shadow of what is to come. But the body - he uses the word body (soma)..."

Jon: NIV is "reality."

Tim: "...the substance belongs to the Messiah." I think here we get a view of Paul's view of all of the holy years of Leviticus 23. They all point to a reality that has arrived in the Messiah.

Jon: Which practically if it's not practically whether or not you'd celebrate a certain day or festival, it's practically whether or not you're living in community with righteousness, and peace and love.

Tim: Loving your neighbor. That's right. Let's back to Roman. He goes on in Romans 15 to accepting one...he says "Accept one another as the Messiah accepted you." He's writing to mostly Gentiles. Jewish Messiah accepted you. So darn it, you receive your Jewish brothers and sisters in the Messiah. And do not make them feel secondary because they honor God by keeping Shabbat.

Jon: So fascinating.

Tim: Yeah. What it is, is crazy how quickly the Jesus movement became turned on its roots. And not just being indifferent to his Jewish roots but actively hostile to Jewish communities.

Jon: And that especially happens in a place where the Jewish people had to get up and leave for a decade.

Tim: Like in Rome. Totally. Paul would be appalled at how people ignored his words.

Jon: And Paul, he still follows the Sabbath?

Tim: We don't know.

Jon: We don't know. We know that when he went back to Jerusalem and he was asked to go to the temple, he was like, "Yeah, great."

Tim: That's great. And he fulfills a vow. In his missionary journeys, he always goes to the Jewish community first, which means go into synagogue on Shabbat, and he participates in the readings and...

Jon: Okay.

Tim: He gives every sign and he...

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Jon: Like if he was at one of these banquets and there was some pork on the table, would he be the weaker brother that said, like, "I'm not going eat that?"

Tim: Yeah, totally. People debate these things.

Jon: And they have the evidence.

Tim: And people have a range of views on these things. I haven't given it enough recent thought to have an informed opinion. But some people emphasize what he does in 1 Corinthians 9 is "I have certain rights as an apostle, but I don't use them. All things to all people." His default mode is his heritage—Jewish traditions. But when he's among Gentiles, he won't make it an issue. But it's default as Jewish. That's some people's view. For some people, they flip it and say actually his main view now is not adhering to any of that. But he when he's with Messianic Jews...

Jon: He'll do it.

Tim: ...he'll observe the traditions.

Jon: What did he get angry with Peter about?

Tim: What we get angry with Peter about is Peter starts acting like he can't eat with non-Jews. Treating them like second rate members of the Messiah's Family

Jon: Got it. Which is different than saying, "I'll do Jewish things when I'm with Jews."

Tim: That's right. This is a tension that persists to this day. There's so many different groups with so many different views about how Jesus' followers relate to their roots in the family of Abraham. There you go.

Jon: The question rattling in my brain is then, as a modern Gentile Christian, non-Jewish Christian, who is fascinated with the Sabbath as a ritual and so is my culture now it seems like, it's in the air...

Tim: There's a network of churches that are encouraging people to Shabbat.

Jon: Practice Shabbat, although...

[crosstalk 00:53:23]

Tim: Is it the Sunday Shabbat or the...?

Jon: Pick your day.

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Tim: Pick your 24 hours?

Jon: Yeah. It's not super rigid. Well, I mean, there's a spectrum. There's some people who are like, "No, you got to do the Friday night, Saturday thing. Then some people were like, "No, just pick the day, make it a day and follow it and make it a spiritual discipline" Then it becomes part of the whole culture of just spiritual disciplines. The same way we fast and pray, we should stop to rest. And there is a beauty in it. I was listening to a guy teach on it and just saying, " Yeah, like, on Saturday morning, we'll walk and we'll get a doughnut and people go, "What are you doing?" "Today, we just hang out and we don't work and we have sex and..." They're married; he can't bring up sex. It's an important Sabbath ritual for them.

Tim: More information on that one.

Jon: It's a whole day. And drink wine and for that. He painting this picture that any Portlander would be like, "Sign me up for that day."

Tim: I see. Got it. Got it.

Jon: You know what I mean?

Tim: Yeah, sure.

Jon: There's this sense of excitement about...

Tim: It's desirable.

Jon: They are making it desirable.

Tim: In the culture of overwork, it actually is a value that becomes attractive. It's a practice that becomes attractive again. And surely that's exactly how it was for Jewish communities living in Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Roman Empire, where people found it an attractive practice. And it is attractive.

Jon: It is attractive. I think about the point of the Sabbath isn't just to have a day that sounds fun. Paul never seems to...it doesn't seem like what he's talking about. He's not encouraging...I don't know. I don't remember what I started talking about this for. There was...

Tim: I think you're trying to discern if there's any leverage towards doing it versus not doing it in the New Testament. I think that Paul was so enthralled with what happened when he would show up with whatever co-workers he had with him as he goes into a city, and start telling the story of Jesus to people in the marketplace, start praying with them,

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hearing their stories, inviting them to the love feast that they would do on Sundays to commemorate the resurrection.

People would get healed and people would share with each other and slaves and masters would eat at the same table together, and women who were oppressed in their home could lead the community in prayer and worship, and the Holy Spirit would speak through people. Paul was into that. As far as we can tell, that was the Resurrection Sunday meal gathering. That's where he experienced the new creation. It seems when you read his letters, that's what Paul's...he's excited about that. For him, I think from Friday night to Saturday night, "That's cool. Do that. But come be a part of this community..."

Jon: "Do that, don't do that."

Tim: "...and experience the Spirit of the new creation and love each other." But that does not make Sabbath adherence like a thing that's going to divide us when the Spirit of Jesus is doing this work in our midst. That's that was Paul's letters for a long time. I think that's...

Jon: What do you think he would say to non-Jewish people getting really fascinated with the Sabbath? Same thing? Like, "Don't get too distracted with the real thing, which is..."

Tim: I think he would say, "Listen, one person observes that day and he observes that for the Lord. And one person eats kosher, and he does that for the Lord's." This is Romans 14:6. They give thanks to God, and the person who does the opposite things give thanks to God. So if it's a practice that helps you..

Jon: If it brings you closer to Jesus, then do it.

Tim: Yeah, do that. Do that. Foster the life habits that will increase your devotion to Jesus and do that. That's why I was saying earlier for somebody who didn't grow up with any sort of religious structuring of time in my heritage...Our family attended church when I was growing up, but I didn't like it. For me, it's very helpful to designate a day. I guess I'm probably in the typical camp of like, because of resurrection Sunday worship, we just kind of go with that day for that rhythm. It's good. It's a gift. I look forward to the slow day.

Jon: To remind yourself that you are not master of time.

Tim: I'm not a master of my time. I'm not going to produce anything today that I would normally produce during the week. I'm not. That's strict about it. I'm making it sound more thoughtful than I thought.

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Jon: But couldn't you make an argument, though, that a Christian should try to live that way every day?

Tim: I see. I see.

Jon: But there is something about the preparation to live a day in such a way that's unnaturally restful. It requires all this preparation and requires all these guidelines. And that's kind of what the Sabbath day does to a community.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. That's right. Maybe the kingdom is now and not yet. The Sabbath is here and yet to be fulfilled.

Jon: So live like the Sabbath is here every day but on the seventh day...

Tim: Do it like especially.

Jon: Pretend like it really is here and act like it's really here.

Tim: Totally.

Jon: Once we spent you know however many hours talking through the Hebrew Scriptures and how important in this theme, then you get to Paul and all sudden it feels like it's not important anymore.

Tim: I understand. Maybe that's where the sun rise in the living room with your lamp. Analogy. Maybe that fits a little better for Paul. In his cultural context, the lamp has become...if the Spirit guides you to have that lamp to remind you of the sun, keep the lamp.

Jon: Christians live in this paradoxical way in which the sun has now arrived, but sometimes it's night. We don't need the lamp, but we need it when it's night.

Tim: In fact, the chapter before Romans 14, it's right at the end of Romans 13, "Love your neighbor, because love is the fulfillment of the Torah. And do this: love your neighbor, knowing the time that already is the hour for you to wake up from sleep..."

Jon: The sun's up.

Tim: Yeah, the sun's risen. Because salvation is nearer than when we believed. Wait, the sun is yet to...

[crosstalk 01:00:39]

Jon: The sun is up or the sun is gone up?

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Tim: The sun is almost gone, the day is near, therefore, let's lay aside the deeds that are done in the dark and put on the armor of light. Behave properly like you're in the daytime and everybody can see, not in drunkenness and sexual misbehavior. Put on the Lord Jesus. Dude, these metaphors. But that idea of the sun's risen is not fully up, but it's shining enough that it warrants a completely different way of life. But keeping the lamp on Shabbat reminds you that the sun has risen.

[01:01:48]

Tim: Mark 16. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John's resurrection narratives, all four of them connected to the apostles. The empty tomb story, all registered and makes a really big deal to tell you that it happened on the morning after the Sabbath on the first day of the new week.

Jon: Genesis 1:1.

Tim: It's day one of the new ultimate week. Jesus's death took place over a Passover Sabbath weekend. It was one of the special Passovers, which is why the Jewish leaders couldn't go all the way into the pilots...

Jon: Interesting.

Tim: John registers that detail. Jesus goes to Jerusalem for Passover, he's executed over a Passover Sabbath. And then his resurrection takes place on the eighth day or the first day of the week of the ultimate Sabbath.

Jon: So we're in a new week leading now to the ultimate Sabbath. So do you still need the light for one, the sun does set in one through six because we're still in that. But the new light of day one is the hope that day seven really is coming this time.

Tim: That's right. I just wanted to register the language.

Jon: Wow.

Tim: Mark 16 "When the Sabbath was over, Mary and Salome come bringing spices very early at sunrise—the peak of the sun. He tells it's very early on the first day of the week. Right at dawn. The point is Jesus' resurrection was the first day of new creation. First day of the new week.

Jon: History in the post risen Jesus era is a new type of week waiting for a new type of liberation. And the liberation that it's hoping for is all centered on what Jesus did at the end of the previous week. Then all these weeks cycles, again in Genesis 1, liberation of darkness and disorder into order and being able to rule with God in a beautiful world. Which then gets disrupted by evil and sin. And now we have then a new

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liberation week of God taking a people oppressed by evil and sin out into to freedom. It seems like another week has begun.

Tim: That's right. Remember Israel's exile was like a super Sabbath - upside down Sabbath. So Jesus brings Israel's exile to its end by taking Israel and humanity's death and exile onto himself on a Passover Sabbath weekend. It's as if Jesus brings the upside-down exile to a close but simultaneously launches the new creation so that the empty tomb...Why did they'll tell us that it's the first rays of the sun?

Jon: It's day one. Let there be light.

Tim: Day one of the new week after the Sabbath. It's "Let there be light." The light of day one in Genesis 1 is God's own glory bringing life and light to the universe.

Jon: That's cool. Oh, wow. There's something here that helps bring clarity....

Tim: We have to do this in the video. We have to find a way.

Jon: It brings clarity to kind of like it seems like especially Paul has this mentality of we're still waiting and I'm still struggling for the thing but I'm doing it in light of this hope that has already been realized on day one. I'm waiting for day seven. But I can look back to day one and see...

Tim: Day one's already launched.

Jon: ...it's going to happen.

Tim: The sun's risen.

Jon: "I know how the story goes." Day one light comes and there's liberation. And now the day one light is Jesus and ultimate liberation will be through that day one light.

Tim: You can see why Genesis 1 imagery became so valuable. It permeates all the new testament of God's light shining.

Jon: This is a light theme video too. That'd be a different theme video.

Tim: Oh, that's a good point. In as much as the seventh day is a culmination of light and life, but it begins with Let there be light and the Sabbath lighting of the candles.

Jon: And then on the seventh day you don't need the sun because of the day one light.

Tim: Correct.

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Jon: Thanks for listening to this episode of The Bible Project podcast. This episode is dropping in December 2019. And so this month, we are raising money to help fund our ministry. Everything we're raising in December goes towards 2020. If you want to see more about what's going on, go to thebibleproject.com/vision. We want to show our gratitude for you our patrons and our listeners. We want to highlight some of the stories that we've unearthed about the impact that we've seen this have, which is really exciting. Today, I want you to hear a story from Cassie and Andrew. They were able to sit down with our producer Dan and share that story.

Cassie: Hi, I'm Cassie.

Andrew: And I'm Andrew.

Together: And we're digital nomads.

Andrew: I work online and we've been traveling the world living in South Korea, Australia, Seattle, just all over and we're just really blessed to go on the journey that God's taking us on.

Cassie: I'm a writer. My author name is Cassandra Cielo and I have utilized The Bible Project to help me in my writing. I wrote my first sci-fi fantasy fiction book. Book "From Ash." I've always been inspired by C.S. Lewis and Tolkien, and just having that undercurrent allegory of faith in my writing. The Bible Project, listening to the podcast, has actually been a huge inspiration. Listening to the word studies, listening to the different meanings in the text and the way Tim and Jon discuss it, a lot of times I'm able to interpret that through the world that I create within my story. There's a ton of undercurrent things. There's some Hebrew that I've woven into my books from The Bible Project videos and different meanings.

I went to seminary and have my Master's in theology, but we didn't quite learn the way that Tim and Jon discuss things and the way that they bring the Greek and the Hebrew into the discussion and they really go back to the root of everything. I think it was like in an older podcast they were talking about, like the cities of refuge. So I listened to the podcast and then I researched on my own a lot of the cities of refuge stuff. And so some of the cities within my book are actually named after the cities of refuge from the Bible. The Hebrew language is so beautiful in the way that it's discussed and described in the podcast.

The Bible is such a complex book. I don't think anyone can ever write something that complex. But we can certainly try to make something that is that beautifully written and just has an ability to connect with people

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on multiple levels on a deeper level and emotional level, and on a logical level. That's all I can hope to do.

Andrew: We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus.

Cassie: We're crowdfunded project by people like me.

Andrew: Find free videos, study notes, podcasts and more at thebibleproject.com.