

Apocalyptic Letters E2 Final

Dreams and Visions

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Jon: Hey, this is Jon at the BibleProject. Today we're talking about how to read apocalyptic literature in the Bible. And if you've seen any movies, you know that the apocalypse means the end of the world.

Tim: In the Bible, the word "apocalypse" does not mean the final destruction of the world. That's not what it means. All you have to do is get out a concordance and look at the uses of the word.

Jon: Apocalypse is a Greek word, and it actually means "to reveal something" or "uncover something." A biblical apocalypse is when God's perspective on the world is revealed to us. The apostle Paul had an apocalypse on the road to Damascus when Jesus revealed Himself to him. The prophet Daniel had an apocalypse when God revealed the meaning of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream to him. In fact, one of the most common ways that God's perspective of the world is revealed is through dreams.

Tim: We think of dreams, in our culture, as windows to the inside of someone. Here's what's fascinating, is that most human cultures for most of human history have the opposite understanding of dreams. Most traditional cultures see dreams as a window to something outside of myself. It's an altered state of consciousness that potentially reveals the true nature of the world.

Jon: Today, we're going to get apocalyptic. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.
We've made it to the end of this ongoing series on how to read the Bible. Here's our final topic.

Tim: Yeah. The last video in the series will be how to read apocalyptic literature in the Bible. Saving the best for last.

Jon: Is it the best?

Tim: I don't know. It's culminating in a significant way.

Jon: The last book of the Bible is apocalyptic.

Tim: The last book the Bible is typewritten in the literary style that has some predecessors in the Hebrew Bible, and in some scenes in the New Testament, as we'll see. It's come to be called by scholars, apocalyptic literature for reasons we will talk about. It also shares literary features with a lot of other Jewish literature of the same period that are either now contained in collections called the Apocrypha, or the pseudepigrapha, which we'll talk about all that.

Anyway, let's start here. Jon, do you have any memories of recent dreams that you had?

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Jon: Yeah. I dream a lot.

Tim: You sleep a lot.

Jon: I sleep a lot. I was just telling my wife how I had like back to back dreams.

Tim: Oh. Like you woke up and went back to sleep?

Jon: No, actually. This is pretty recent. Maybe like five nights ago. I had a dream. And then this dream...I mean, dreams are weird because they're hard to remember. And when you do remember them, you just remember these little fragments and emotions. And then to try to explain it, it just gets ridiculous.

Tim: It's actually hard, at least, for me, to listen to someone else's dream. Because it's so subconscious. It's like. "What does it all mean?"

Jon: I was just about to tell you two of my dreams.

Tim: I'm so sorry. No, I asked you. I asked you. But I'm just saying, when you hear someone else describe a dream, you're like, "Oh, yeah, I want to know."

Jon: Oh, no, totally. It's always just like, "Okay."

Tim: Yeah, totally.

Jon: Tristen is taking this life coaching class, and part of it was the importance of dreams. So she wanted to dissect it.

Jon: Okay, let's talk about your dreams.

Jon: It wasn't interesting, so I don't know if I want to talk about it. But I'll just say that one night, I have a dream and in the dream, I felt really good about myself. I felt like everything I did worked out. It felt like people liked me. It just felt good. And that's rare for me in dreams. Then the next night, I have the complete opposite dream where it's like I feel like I don't belong. I feel like I shouldn't be there. People are just putting up with me. I'm saying stupid things. I can't do anything right.

Tim: Wow, fascinating.

Jon: And what was actually happening in the dreams, that's where it just gets weird...

[crosstalk 00:04:23]

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- Tim: That's the impression from each dream world. Wow.
- Jon: But in the second one, there was some flying. There was this weird flying where like we're also shooting stuff in the sky. Which is really weird. This is like these really strange moments. We were by the sea at this one point for some reason. You know, it's just super abstract.
- Tim: Did Tristen have any insight or questions about that or did she just want to listen?
- Jon: It was like early in the morning and I think the day just took over.
- Tim: I understand. Got it. So she didn't psychoanalyze your dreams?
- Jon: Yeah.
- Tim: So this contrasting dreams about what your value...self-worth?
- Jon: Yeah, self-worth.
- Tim: That's really interesting. That feels like it's coming from a place deep inside. All right?
- Jon: Yeah.
- Tim: I mean, those are issues we all feel and think about all the time but rarely talk about in the open. That's interesting.
- Jon: Totally.
- Tim: I don't recall my dreams very often. But one recurring dream...Do you have recurring dreams?
- Jon: Yeah.
- Tim: Themes. It's very common, I think. The most consistent one I have are dreams under the motif of not being prepared or not being done with something that I thought was done. Regular recurring dream is I'm either in some kind of school setting or I'm living my life and I get a call from the University of Wisconsin in Madison that I'd never actually finished my PhD.
- Jon: Yes. I have this dream too. Dreams about high school.
- Tim: About high school.
- Jon: I realized I didn't graduate high school or like I wasn't prepared for a test and I'm like, "Oh."

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Tim: You get a call. Like it's all a sham. You have to come back and complete one more course. Anyway. Did I ever tell you the story of how I didn't pass my PhD dissertation?

Jon: No. You failed it first time?

Tim: No. I worked really hard for three years on this and finished. It's a huge project, and I really enjoyed it. But I was ready to move on with my life. It was like the big day of the dissertation defense. So I got the professors in my department, and then I had to ask one outside reader from a medieval literature department. He was an expert in medieval manuscripts of some important poet. Anyway. Because mine was on the manuscript history of the book of Ezekiel.

I get into the defense and it's all going pretty well, and then there's one professor who just laid into me for a long list of typographical errors and real technical stuff not related to the heart of my thesis. She shredded me.

Then they asked me to—it's normal—they asked me to leave the room. And I'm in a room with like 15 other people watching the defense. Mostly other students. My wife was there, a couple of friends. Then they asked everyone to leave the room. So I'm standing outside the room and everyone's chit-chatting in the hallway, asking me, "Hey, how did you feel? That went okay. Boy, you got roasted there." All I can hear is raised voices through the door in the room for about 20 minutes. I mean, this is the culmination of seven years of work, and my life is on the line. Like the fate of my life. Everything I'd work for. And everyone's trying to chitchat, and all I can hear is the raised voices behind the door about my work.

Then they let me back in and they informed me that I passed, but with revisions. So I had to enroll for another semester, and do this long list of revisions, do some additional research. In the end, then I passed. I got an email that I passed like five months later.

Jon: So, you truly did...?

[crosstalk 00:08:20]

Tim: It was traumatic.

Jon: Oh, yeah, it was traumatic.

Tim: Yeah, it was traumatic. Oh, yeah, I finished and I passed.

Jon: The dreams are wrong.

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Tim: But that experience has left a mark on me. I know about it consciously is when I wake up with these dreams that I actually didn't pass. Anyway,

Jon: I think it's very common people having dreams about not being prepared or not accomplishing or finishing a thing that you thought you did.

Tim: That's right. Or being exposed before others as you were sharing. Okay. All right. Let's pause. Let's take stock for a moment. We're having this conversation. This is a typical conversation between two modern Westerners about their dreams. Neither one of us are psychologists. Your wife's a therapist, so you kind of get some of that infusion in your life. For us, dreams are strange, odd, funny, you tell stories about them. And then we have a sense that like, "yeah, they're probably tapping into some deep, subconscious things in me." But we see them as a window into our internal lives. Right?

Jon: Or psyche.

Tim: And this is all post-Freud and Carl Jung. I don't know that much about the history of psychology. But I know enough to know that dream interpretation as a window into the reality of your subconscious, that's the meaning of dreams that I've been raised with in my cultural setting. Do you resonate with that?

Jon: Mh mmh.

Tim: Yeah, totally. Here's what's fascinating, is that most human cultures for most of human history have the opposite understanding of dreams. We think of dreams in our culture as windows to the inside of someone. Most traditional cultures see dreams as a window to something outside of myself. It's an altered state of consciousness that potentially reveals the true nature of the world to you. And think, through human history, cultures are developing. You know, everybody's having dreams, just like you and I are, but other cultures see them—and it differs from culture to culture—as a window into the transcendent or a peek behind the curtain.

Jon: My dreams never feel that way.

Tim: Totally. But to me, that's what's fascinating is that even my experience of my own dreams has been shaped by this cultural understanding of dreams that I've been given. And I've never even taken a class on it. I've just absorbed it.

Jon: Right.

Tim: What's interesting about the Bible and apocalyptic literature is this is a literature that essentially is just underrated out of people's dreams and

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visions. Altered states of consciousness. And the Bible is participating in a pretty widely shared assumption. And it's still shared in many cultures today and subcultures in America, the dreams are like putting on...There's a movie trope where a character in a story gets a set of glasses and can put them on and then see the reality of things. I'm thinking of handful of movies where people can see who's an alien or not.

Jon: Oh, I don't know...

Tim: You know what I'm talking about? There's a number of movies where it's like you put on your glasses, and now you see who's an alien masquerading as a human and is not. Anyway. It's similar. That's how dreams were understood in ancient world, in ancient Near East as windows into the divine...where heaven and earth are one. I don't know if you've ever noticed or thought about how many dreams and visions there are in the Bible, but it's a lot. All over.

Jon: Now, whenever you're reading about a dream in the Bible, you're reading apocalyptic literature?

Tim: Well, we'll talk about this.

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: It's a moment of someone having an apocalypse. But we need to first back up...

Jon: What's a moment?

Tim: We'll get there. We'll get there. Before we even talk about the word "apocalypse" or "apocalyptic"...

Jon: We're talking about dreams.

Tim: Just talking about dreams. And now I'm connecting it to the fact that there are lots of dreams in the Bible. If you tell someone about a dream you had in the ancient world, they're more likely to pay attention and be like, "Oh, this is the message. You're being given an understanding about reality that we aren't normally given." Dreams are a source of authority in the ancient world, whereas now we just see them as highly subjective and just a window into your own psyche as opposed to about the world at large. Isn't that contrast? interesting?

Jon: Yeah. If someone comes and tells you about their dream, you're kind of bored. And you're like, "Okay, that's your dream." But in the ancient world, someone tells a dream, and it's like, "You got a special message from the universe."

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- Tim: That's right. Your 17-year-old brother comes to you and says, "You know, I had these two dreams that everybody in the family was bowing down to me." In our culture, we would respond like Joseph's brothers in that story in Genesis 37. "What? You're crazy. You think you're going to rule over us?" This is Joseph's dream. His brothers see it as he thinks that this is a prediction of some kind, as opposed to saying, "You twerp."
- Jon: "You narcissist."
- Tim: "Dreams of grandeur." That kind of thing. I mean, they kind of do think that because they are jealous and angry. Think of how many famous dreams there are. Oh, the birth stories of Jesus are filled with dreams. Joseph has a dream what's why he decided not to divorce Mary. Because of a dream. They go down to Egypt to flee Herod because of a dream. Pilate's wife has a dream about Jesus. In the passion story of Jesus in the gospels, Matthew, he tells us about a dream that Pilate's wife has and she says, "Have nothing to do this Jesus of Nazareth. Stay away from Him."
- Jon: There are lots of dreams. There's obviously Joseph when he gets to Egypt and he dreams. The calves.
- Tim: Oh, yeah, Pharaoh's dream.
- Jon: Pharaoh's dream.
- Tim: Yeah, that's right.
- Jon: He interprets. Daniel interprets dreams.
- Tim: There's a whole layer of stories and literature in the Bible that is generated out of ancient Israelites having dreams and altered states of consciousness. Tell me how you feel about this.
- Jon: I guess it doesn't seem strange to me because I'm kind of used to that.
- Tim: I see. But when you put it in the sense of if someone gave me their Journal of dreams and said, "This is really important," I'd be like, "No, it's not." I mean, it's important. If I want to get to know you.
- Tim: Yeah, yeah, that's right. Again, we're back to that.
- Jon: But otherwise, it's really not that significant. And so it is strange from that mindset to go back to the Bible and go look at all these dreams and how important they are. Because it doesn't fit that paradigm. But for whatever reason, I've become inoculated to that contradiction. But thank you for bringing that up. That's really interesting. Someone just picking

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up the Bible for the first time from our culture, would really be struck with that.

Tim: Yeah, and perhaps even disturbed. Really.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Okay. Not only are you telling me that you follow a man who you think is the creator become human as a Jewish man, who died and then rose again. Next, do you want me to take life guidance from a book, a large layer of which is based upon ancient Israelite dreams? That's how it sounds to a lot of people in our culture.

Jon: Basically, some ancient Israelites went to sleep, neurons are firing randomly throughout their brain, processing their lives, and they then want you to think that unlocks the mysteries of the universe.

Tim: Totally. That is how it sounds to recommend the Bible to someone who hasn't grown up around it. Here's where I want to steer our conversation. In How to Read the Bible series, there's a handful of actual books of the Bible that either have sections of people's dreams and visions that use the vocabulary of apocalypse. There's a whole book, the last book of the Bible, that's called an apocalypse in the first sentence. So there's actually two challenges we need to address right now.

First is just the word "apocalyptic" and "apocalypse." It has a particular meaning in our culture that is not what it means in the Bible. We have to tackle that bull by the horns. I'm mixing my metaphors.

Jon: Yeah, you could tackle a bull by its horns. I wouldn't recommend it.

Tim: And then second, what I want to do is once we get the biblical understanding of what apocalypses are to how they fit into the storyline to the Bible. And this was a whole new frontier of learning and reading for me over the last six months or so. Dude, it's so awesome. I learned so much, and I'm really excited to share it. But I think it's a helpful place to start. That this is dream visionary literature in the Bible that claims to not give us a window so much into the psyche of the dreamer, but actually, these dreams claim to give us a window into the true nature of the universe and its meaning.

Jon: You've been talking about dreams specifically, but there are lots of visions, which are like dreams in that it's an altered state of consciousness of sorts.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. You're just more of in an awake state as opposed to a sleep.

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Jon: But you weren't sleeping when it happened. It's more rare I suppose. I've never experienced it.

Tim: Yeah, I agree. We'll talk about this.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Well, that being said, let's talk about the apocalypse.

[00:18:58]

Tim: Okay, I say the word "apocalypse," Jon Collins, and what do you hear? What fires in your mind?

Jon: End of the World. World War Z?

Tim: Oh, yes.

Jon: Apocalypse now. I mean, there's lots of Mad Max—it's apocalyptic kind of movie.

Tim: Yeah, yeah. Okay. End of the world...fill that more.

Jon: Oh, just like when the order and structure of the world as we know it comes to an end. I guess either completely destroyed or there's some sort of post-apocalyptic reality that now you have to navigate. And that's the like zombies or whatever.

Tim: Yeah, totally. And that phrase, "post-apocalyptic" is a phrase in our culture, meaning after the destruction of the world as we know it. And that trope in movies and literature takes many forms. Because it could still be on planet earth, but just a ruined planet earth, or it could be that now you're floating in space because the planet itself is gone and no longer habitable. Something like that. These are all post-apocalyptic scenarios.

This is the first thing we have to tackle in the video, I think, if we want to reach a broad audience is we're talking about a type of literature that has been given this title, apocalypse or apocalyptic, and the meaning of the word in modern English is not what the word means in the Bible, which is going to cause great confusion. I copied the Dictionary.com definition in the notes here.

Jon: "The complete and final destruction of the world as described in the biblical book of Revelation."

Tim: This is Dictionary.com.

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Jon: Wow, interesting.

Tim: That's the first most common meaning.

Jon: "The complete and final destruction of the world as described in the biblical book of Revelation." That's really fascinating.

Tim: Yes, it is. And then the second meaning?

Jon: The world isn't completely and finally destroyed in the book of Revelation. It's like restored.

Tim: Yeah, totally. There you go. The most common perception of the final book of the Bible, if somebody knows about it in our culture, is that it's about the destruction of the world.

Jon: The second one is "an event involving destruction or damage on an awesome or catastrophic scale."

Tim: That's the meaning being used in post-apocalyptic. Destruction of the world as we know it.

Jon: That definition has created a lot of movies and books.

Tim: Correct. Yeah, totally. We've crossed this fork in the road so many times in this series and all of our videos where a word comes out of the Bible and enters the English language. Apocalypse is not even an English word.

Jon: It's a Greek word?

Tim: It's a Greek word spelled with English letters. The meaning that it now has in English is not at all what it means in the Bible. Like not even close. So we'll just say at one time and then the rest of our conversation. In the Bible, the word "apocalypse" does not mean the final destruction. That's not what it means. All you have to do is get out of concordance and look at the uses of the word, which is what we're going to do right now. But just to be crystal clear, it doesn't mean the end of the world.

Some moments or passages in the Bible, that are in the neighborhood of the word apocalypse describe a cosmic collapse. Like in the book of Revelation. But whether or not those have to do with the complete and final destruction of the world, to quote Dictionary.com, that's a debatable matter. Because there is a cosmos that endures that final destruction right at the end of the book of Revelation. There's still a cosmos.

Jon: There's still an earth.

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Tim: Yeah, but it's a renewed and restored one. There you go. Not only does that meaning of apocalypse in modern English, it leads us to misunderstand what biblical apostle eclipses are actually saying, and then it prevents us from actually being able to understand what they are saying. So it's a double whammy. We're just at a disadvantage from the beginning.

Let's go on a mission first. Let's talk about the word "apocalypse," what it means and doesn't mean. And then once we get an accurate vision of what apocalypses are in the Bible, which is about dreams and visions, then we'll plug it into the storyline to the Bible, see how that unfolds. And then we'll conclude with just some skills for reading this type of literature in the Bible.

[00:24:17]

Tim: All right. Step one. In a nutshell, if you're in an elevator with someone, and you hear them talking about the apocalypse, the end of the world, you could just say, "You know what, here's what's interesting...Hi, my name is...Here's what's really interesting. You know, I once looked up all of the words related to apocalypse in the Bible and what they mean is uncover or to reveal." This is the meaning of apocalypse.

Jon: The meaning of the word apocalypse, to uncover or reveal.

Tim: Let's just look at examples. The Greek word that has come in English, apocalypse, comes from a noun apocalypsis, which means uncovering. But then it can be a verb too, apocalypso, which means "I uncover" or "to uncover." It corresponds to a Hebrew word in the Hebrew Bible, which means the same thing. That's the word "gala." It looks like gala when you transliterate it in English. So should we just look at some examples?

Jon: Yeah. And these words are related. Is it because the Septuagint translate "gala" as "apocalyptic"?

Tim: Correct, yeah. There's one main word for uncover or reveal in Hebrew. Gala. When Jewish scholars, a couple of hundred years before Jesus, started translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek for their grandkids, who were stopping speaking Hebrew because they thought Alexander the Great was awesome, and they wanted to learn Greek, they used two main Greek words. We'll look at the second one in a minute, but the first one is this verb "apocalypso". Here's one very clear example of the meaning of gala in Genesis 9. I'll let you read it.

Jon: "Noah, a man of the soil proceeded to plant a vineyard." This is after he got off the ark?

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- Tim: Get off the tree boat.
- Jon: "And when he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent." And you bolded and underlined "uncovered".
- Tim: Uncovered. It's such a great physical...Well, not a great physical image. I don't know. He's a 600-year-old man, naked in his tent. I don't know how pleasant that image is.
- Jon: People were living to be 800, 900 in those biblical genealogies?
- Tim: No, Noah was the last of that generation.
- [crosstalk 00:26:45]
- Jon: He was old.
- Tim: But the whole point is, it means to not have your clothes on.
- Jon: Naked.
- Tim: To be exposed. To be laid bare.
- Jon: And the word there is "gala."
- Tim: Gala. So we can look at a lot of other examples but this...
- Jon: So are you saying I could say when he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and laid apocalypso? He laid in apocalypse inside his tent.
- Tim: Yeah. He became drunk and there was an apocalypse of his body in the tent.
- Jon: An apocalypse of his body. The uncovering of his body.
- Tim: That's a proper use of the word apocalypse. Or turn it into a verb. His body was apocalypsed.
- Jon: That's funny. We would go, "Oh, destroyed."
- Tim: Yes, that's right. Exactly.
- Jon: So you're saying Noah laid bare?
- Tim: Laid bare.
- Jon: Uncovered.

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Tim: Uncovered, yeah. That's the basic meaning of the word. In fact, here, let me just look at something. Let's look at what the Septuagint translators did here. That would be interesting.

Jon: It's good.

Tim: They just translated "and he became naked." It's the word for "naked". But in Hebrew, it's "and he was exposed." He was uncovered.

Jon: He was uncovered.

Tim: They kind of use and interpret a paraphrase word "he became naked." Which is not what gala means.

Jon: Right.

Tim: It just means to uncover. There's lots of uses of this "to uncover". You can uncover a table, a bowl. A city can be...In fact, sorry, this is fascinating. The word "gala" is the word translated to go into exile in the Prophets. Jerusalem, where the Israelites go into exile, it's the word gala. They are exposed.

Jon: Wait, is that always the word?

Tim: It's one of the most common words, especially in the prophets.

Jon: One of the most common words.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: That we translate exile?

Tim: To go into exile as a translation of gala like...here's an example. Go to Isaiah 5:13. He's talking about how Jerusalem has become party central, big drinking parties among the people who should be leading and protecting the city. And they're just irresponsible drunks, who take advantage of the poor. So this is the poem that he just lays into them.

In verse 13 of Isaiah 5, he says, "Therefore, my people are galad because of their lack of knowledge." He says. "Their honorable men are starving, the multitude in the city is parched with thirst. So the grave has opened its throat and its mouth wide, and all of Jerusalem splendor and multitude, the din of revelry will descend down into it." What he's talking about is how Assyria is coming to town, and God's going to let them surround the city and take it out if they don't change their ways.

Jon: Which is a type of an apocalypse?

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- Tim: Yeah, exactly. It's for the city to be...
- Jon: Sorry, in the sense of the modern sense of undoing.
- Tim: I understand.
- Jon: Right?
- Tim: Yeah.
- Jon: A catastrophic event.
- Tim: Correct, correct. It's catastrophic. But the core meaning of "gala" here is that the city is exposed to, in this case, to danger and exposed...In chapter 20, he'll actually use the imagery of nakedness. You're going to be imprisoned in chain gangs and marched off naked to Assyria—into exile.
- Jon: Why is it translated exile? I mean, it would make just as much sense to say, "Therefore my people are exposed?"
- Tim: That's a great question. You would just have to go in on a case by case basis and look at the context, I think. Because what Isaiah is predicting is that the city will be conquered, there'll be hauled off into captivity as a result of being galad, I guess you'd say it's a paraphrase.
- Jon: This is interesting. This is where the modern idea of a catastrophic of undoing the destruction of the world as we know it, and this other concept of exposing, they kind of merge. Because you're being exposed, now, the realities of your own destruction is going to come upon you. So the two ideas are both present here.
- Tim: Yeah. I think you could say this. The basic meaning is uncovered. To be exposed or uncovered. In certain contexts, you can use the word to mean exposed to danger or attack or captivity. And because of that context, it means something more like exposed to being taken or taken advantage of or hurt, harmed, that kind of thing. Exposure for harm. But that harm meaning is not in the actual word; it's in the context of the usage of the word.
- Jon: So you are going to be exposed. Is that going to bring you harm or not?
- Tim: Correct.
- Jon: It depends on the context.
- Tim: Yeah. And this is just how words work. Like our English word "run" means to physically run down the street. But we also have this phrase, we say

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"he runs the show," or "she runs that company." So we're using the word "run" to now metaphorically mean operating, which is using run as like how your legs operate. I think that's how a metaphor works. And now you're making something run by making it work. The word actually means to make operate in that context, but it's the context that shows that the word run means that not the actual word run. The word "run" means your legs carry you down the street.

Jon: So you're saying that the word "apocalypse" can, in the Bible at times because of the context, mean a catastrophic event?

Tim: Sometimes people have a moment of revealing or something is revealed to them. And what is revealed is about something terrible that's going to happen. But that terrible, something that's going to happen isn't what the word means. It's the word that can be used when you're talking about that subject matter. But there are all kinds of other things as we're going to see that are apocalypse or galad that have nothing to do with the end of the world. So what we're after is, what's the core meaning of this verb that could then be put into other contexts?

Tim: Let me show you another example.

Jon: Okay.

[00:34:14]

Tim: In the book of Genesis, there's quite a lot of dreams. We've talked about a few. Jacob's ladder?

Tim: Exactly. This is interesting. In that story, in Genesis 28, Jacob goes to a certain place—starting in verse 10 and following—and he lays down, and go to sleep. And he had a dream. In the dream, what he sees is a ramp or stairway connecting the land, and its head is in the heavens. And he sees an angelic being. Spiritual beings. Just like traffic.

Jon: And so in this sense, he is seeing the cosmos uncovered in a sense. It's like he was in a place, normal desert area, and then he's dreaming. All of a sudden, some veil is pulled back, and he sees what's really happening.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Later in the Jacob story in Genesis 35, he refers back to that dream. And he says, "There God galad Himself to me." So God was uncovered for him there. But a lot more than God in the dream. It's like, the nature of the cosmos is uncovered. And then he wakes up from his dream and he says, verse 16, "Yahweh is in this place. I didn't even know it." And he started freaking out. And he was like, "This place is terrifying. This is the house of God. This is the gate of the heavens." It's

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like a portal. Right here, this story is the biblical meaning of apocalyptic. It's a perfect example.

Jon: And in that case, it was scary and intense, but didn't mean the undoing of him or the end of his existence, or the end of the world. It just meant that there was some sort of vantage point now that he had. The glasses were put on, as you said earlier.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: He could see more of reality.

Tim: All right. Let's talk about this. This is back to our dream conversation.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: We and our culture see dreams as a window to your internal psyche and what you're processing. This story presumes that on two fronts. Think back to our video and conversations about heaven on earth in the podcast. This was like years ago. The basic biblical cosmology is that the heaven and earth are distinct realms, but they overlap and are actually meant to completely overlap. That's what the garden of Eden story is about, and that's what the end of the biblical story is about. And so, biblical heaven on earth, God, space and human space are actually overlapping realities.

But in the biblical story after the exile from the garden, human becomes - what do you say? Blind to, or unaware of the fact that heaven on earth overlap. Or we actually don't want them to because it's dangerous to us. In the story of the Bible, biblical apocalypses are about moments when people wake up to the true nature of reality. What you just said. You wake up to the fact that, Oh, this is a place or a moment where heaven and earth are one. We might use the word peek behind the curtain.

There's a cosmology at work here because he sees heaven on earth united with this ramp, but also notice it's in a dream. This hit me like a ton of bricks as I was processing all of this. In the biblical imagination, dreams are altered states of consciousness are in between heaven and earth space. It's where you are able to truly encounter reality as it is. Aside from all of these conscious ways that we suppress reality and rewrite reality, it's as if it takes...once our conscious experience of reality it shut down or disarmed to something.

Jon: Sure.

Tim: Right? And I think we actually share this idea in our culture about dreams or altered states of consciousness. That it's somehow all of the conscious

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ways you're manipulating reality and your understanding of it are disarmed and it's just this pure window of your subconscious into your life for your experience. I think that's the idea here is that a disarmed human mind can see reality for what it really is.

Jon: And is it that they can or is it the sense of every dream is?

Tim: Oh, yeah, that's a good question. Well, no, I think as we're going to go on and see it, not every dream is.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Some dreams...

Jon: Some dreams are just dreams. There was a category for them which is just some dreams are just your mind in a state of rumbling.

Tim: Yeah, totally. That's right. Because there's going to be some people come along saying, "I had a dream. I had a dream. This is what Yahweh says." And Jeremiah's going to say, "No, you're making that dream up."

Jon: I see. Okay. This is interesting. You're saying that in a dream state, you have the ability to see things as they really are.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: Because you're not getting in the way, your consciousness...what's interesting about that is it's really trippy to think about how our experience of the world is just a construct in our brains.

Tim: Totally.

Jon: Right?

Tim: Yes. Yes.

Jon: And that our brain doesn't actually care to let us experience what actually is happening.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: What it wants to do is it wants to give you a representation. Pretty quick and dirty representation of what's happening, good enough so that you can survive.

Tim: So that you don't die.

Jon: Yeah, so you don't die and so that you can live a life that's great.

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Tim: Yeah, that's exactly right.

Jon: Maybe we've talked about this but color is a great example of this.

Tim: Yes, it is.

Jon: Like, when you're seeing color you're seeing wavelengths. And the color white, for example, is actually every single wavelength coming at you. Blue, red, green, everything. And your brain is just like, "Oh, that's just white. I'm just going to represent that as white." Which is not actually what's happening. It's like every color.

Tim: Yeah, exactly.

Jon: And it's weird to think about...oh, so you know how the mantis shrimp, or - is that what they're called?

Tim: Oh, yeah, yeah, totally.

Jon: They have like 17 color cones.

Tim: Their eyes are so awesome looking. They look like a glowing radiating rainbow.

Jon: And so they can see ultraviolet rays, they can see all these things. So they're seeing colors we can't even imagine.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: Imagine all sudden getting a few extra color cones and now you can see x-rays, and you can see all these. You'd be looking out into the sky and it would be like some brand new place. It would feel like an unveiling.

Tim: Like I've been blind to the true reality that's right in front of me but I don't have eyes to see it, though.

Jon: In both those cases, the equipment that we have to see reality, but then also the fact that we are just creating a...we're almost simulating reality in our brain so that we can just navigate through what's happening. That we actually can get in the way of experiencing what's really going on.

Tim: Totally. Those are such good examples, Jon. That's within a modern framework.

Jon: This is what optical illusions are.

Tim: Yes, that's right.

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Jon: Optical illusions are just playing on the fact that your brain is doing shortcuts that are not actually experiencing reality as it is, but just helping you experience reality to be efficient and helpful. And so that's where we get all these crazy...

Tim: Optical illusions. And more than that. I think spatial orientation works like this too, where...I've told you the story before. When it's nice weather in Portland, maybe six, seven months a year, I walk to work so that I can read while I walk. So I've programmed a few paths, a few routes so that I know where all the cracks in the sidewalk are, and I can just read and not have to look where I'm going. Except when I cross the street. I put down the book when I'm crossing the street. But it's happened to me numerous times where I maybe took a different turn when I get close to the studio, and I look up from my book, and I don't know where I am for about 10, 15 seconds. And I realized, "Oh, I took a different turn subconsciously..."

Jon: That's funny.

Tim: "...and where I thought I was is not where I am."

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: So my brain had created reality while I was walking.

Jon: Or you thought you were.

Tim: Created an alternate reality that didn't correspond to where I actually was. It's a silly example but...

Jon: Well, we do this all time in relationships too, where it's like, I create a reality of what I think your motives are, what I think why you're doing what you're doing. And it could be completely wrong. But I'm creating it so I can try to navigate through the world.

Tim: Exactly right.

Jon: Now, with that said, it's also strange to say, when you're sleeping or in some altered state of consciousness, you can experience reality as it truly is. You can make the argument that, no, you're actually experiencing just some even more warped experience of reality.

Tim: Oh, I understand.

Jon: It's still silly...

Tim: But wasn't this the core contribution, again, of Freud and Jung to say that our ego, our conscious self is encountering reality and then fabricating

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narratives to make it less painful, more pleasurable, so we can survive? What our subconscious is, it's unmanipulated self. It's unfabricated self. And the way that it communicates to us is often through symbols, images, these fantastic imagery that fill our dreams. But the core intuitions...I mean, you just told me a few minutes ago about these dreams of feeling like valued and important member of the world that's affirmed and welcomed, and then another dream where you're a fraud and a sham and all this. Dude, that's deep stuff.

Jon: Gets to the core.

Tim: And that's probably what's really going on with all of us, but that's so sensitive and so vulnerable that our conscious self just covers all that up. It's the same thing as like the bully on the playground is probably the most insecure kid on the playground, but he masks it by over asserting.

Jon: It's a disarming place, is dreams.

Tim: That's right. I actually think the Jacob story is perfect. Why is he sleeping in a field?

Jon: He's running.

Tim: He and his mom just manipulated his dad and his brother. His brother wants to kill him and so he has to run for his life.

Jon: It's almost probably creating this whole story of like why that's happening.

Tim: Yes, yes. So he lays down and he has this dream where the God of his ancestors...God appears to him and start talking. "I'm God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." And what he hears God say is, "Listen, the promise that I gave to your father and your grandfather, I'm going to multiply your descendants here in this land. You're going to come back to the land." It's as if it's this moment of clarity. And he sees that his life is actually the stage of God's purposes and plans and that all of his manipulating and scheming and the suffering and pain of the relationships that are all broken, all that stripped away. And he sees all of this as a vehicle of the thing that God is doing in my life. And all of a sudden to be laid bare, or to be exposed, that's exactly. What a great word to describe this moment. I like this idea of this peeling back of your conscious fabrications to the true nature of reality.

Jon: Interesting. Can you imagine if I granted you the ability right now to peel all that back? Would you do it?

Tim: It's a good question.

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Jon: It would be really intense. Like if all of a sudden you were able to see why you're really doing what you're doing and the state of the city that you're living in, and the pain and the suffering, but also the good, but just everything just becomes crystallized for what it really is, it would be really intense.

Tim: One version of that is going to see a therapist.

Jon: Yeah, but that takes like weeks and weeks and weeks as they slowly massage you into being able to do it.

Tim: That's right. But think, the window to the internal is that form of exposure. That's why the experience of therapy is so painful for so many of us. But then also flip that external. What if you could see the reality of all of the people and the stories that we're all living by and believing and it's all laid bare. What Jacob sees is that his life isn't just a set of molecules bouncing off out into chaos. What he sees is that there's a divine order and purpose, that heaven on earth really are one, and that his life and all of human history is the stage of God's purpose to reunite heaven on earth.

Jon: I think that's the beautiful thing about biblical narrative is, when that happens, when there's apocalypse, when there's an unveiling, it's intense, but ultimately what you find there is the slain Lamb who is there for you, who wants to recreate you and find love.

Tim: Yes.

[00:48:51]

Tim: These are the two sides of biblical apocalyptic. Sometimes it's somebody who's suffering, hurting in pain. Like, here, Jacob. Or with the book of Revelation, it's seven church communities, some of whom are being persecuted and killed for following Jesus. Others of which are affluent, wealthy, and apathetic. And so, to those who are suffering, the biblical apocalypse brings great assurance that all of the pain, all of this chaos is the stage of God's loving purposes to restore creation. But yet for the apathetic and the affluent, that same apocalypse is a warning. Like everything that you think is important and care about, it's all a sham.

Jon: The power you think you have...

Tim: It's all going away. It's all going to get stripped away, uncovered in light of the reality of God's justice that's going to address everything that's so screwed up about our world on the way to healing it. And so biblical apocalypse is comfort and they challenge. They warn, and they assure—bring assurance of God's love. But it's the same thing happening

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underneath all of apocalyptic in general. It's uncovering the true nature of reality, which tells the truth about myself and then tells the truth about who's really in charge around here, and what's really going on if you could peel back the curtain.

Jon: If you're exposed to someone who loves you, and who's for you, it can be a beautiful and intimate thing, and full of joy and hope. If you're exposed to an enemy, or if you're exposed in a situation where you're in danger, it's frightening and horrible.

Tim: Yeah, that's exactly right. This is the big picture of apocalyptic, the meaning of what the word is in the Bible. What I think might be helpful to do is go through from here, some more uses of the word and some more stories of apocalypses just to kind of keep building this portrait—it's about when somebody gets a window into the true nature of reality. And then this will help us go back to, of course, the garden of Eden and see and understand it as the first apocalypse.

Jon: Okay. Thanks for listening to this episode of the BibleProject podcast. Next week, we'll continue our discussion on how to read apocalyptic literature. We'll talk about how an apocalypse isn't something that we create. Rather, an apocalypse is something that happens to us.

Tim: If you read the Gospels, what they're saying is that in and of themselves, humans remain blind to the true nature of reality. We need the creator to pull back the veil, so to speak. In the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, Jesus' claim right here in Matthew 11 is that He is the one who pulls back the curtain to the nature of reality and the nature of who He is. And unless you undergo that apocalypse, you won't understand Him or yourself or the world.

Jon: Today's show was produced by Dan Gummel. The theme music is from the band Tents. If you're new to the BibleProject, well, welcome. We are a group of artists and educators in Portland, Oregon, and we create resources that show the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. These resources are free because they've already been paid for by people like you who have pitched in and allowed us to just work on this project. And we're so thankful for you. So thank you for being a part of this with us.

Sarah: Hi, this is Sarah Worsham [SP] from Dallas, Texas. My favorite thing about the BibleProject is how accessible it makes the scriptures to people who have never gotten a formal Bible training or education. I love to use it in one on one Bible study and in small groups. We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. We're a crowdfunded project by people like me. Find free videos, study notes, podcasts, and more at the bibleproject.com.