

Son of Man E3 Final

The Snake in the Throne Room

Podcast Date: January 28, 2019

(48:29)

Speakers in the audio file:

Jon Collins

Tim Mackie

Jon: Hey, this is Jon at The Bible Project. Today, we continue our series discussing the phrase "the Son of Man." This is a phrase that Jesus uses to refer to himself. It's a phrase found most famously in Daniel 7, where Son of Man, literally meaning a human, rides up on a cloud and then sits on a throne right next to Yahweh himself, and together they rule the world.

Last week, we went back to the beginning of the Bible to see how this theme, the theme of a man coming to rule, is all over the first chapters of the Bible. Humans are made in God's image to rule the world with God, and perhaps everything would have gone great except for an encounter with the beast.

Tim: The serpent.

Jon: The talking snake in Genesis 3, it's a mysterious and surprising character. It's an animal, and it's clearly dangerous. But is it merely a snake?

Tim: So clearly that the snake is identified as a beast of the field, but also as exceptional among the beasts. This creature is also presented as having knowledge of God's decisions.

Jon: The snake pretends to be clearing up a miscommunication that God had with these humans. He says, "Hey, if you eat from this tree of knowing good and evil, you're not going to die. In fact, you will become like the Elohim." The spiritual beings.

Tim: What is the snake? How does it know this? It's like it has insider knowledge of God's counsel decision making.

Jon: This is no ordinary snake. The snake represents something evil and sinister, some spiritual power enticing humans to give up their cooperative rule with God, and instead, seize the opportunity to rule on their own terms with their own knowing of good and evil.

Tim: The humans instead of exercising authority over this beast, the humans are lured into self-destruction by this beast. So you have this ironic inversion of the ideal from Genesis 1. You have now a beast that's ruling over the humans.

Jon: Giving into the snake turns us in to beasts. We lose our humanity and instead, become heirs of the snake. God gives a poetic response to Adam and Eve's decision. He says, "I'm going to put hostility between the snake and the woman, and between the snake's offspring and the woman's offspring."

Tim: What that's telling us is there's going to be a future human who strikes the serpent and that human's going to be, however, in hostility with people who give in to the serpent. So there's going to be a line of humans who preserve this true humaneness. And that line's always going to be in hostility with people who are acting like animals.

Jon: The offspring of the woman will crush the snake's head and the snake will strike his heel.

Tim: Eventually, there will be one human who will deal not just with the seed of the serpent, but deals with the serpent itself. There you go. That's about the of Son of Man.

Jon: We'll talk about all of that and more on today's show. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[00:03:23]

Jon: Here we go.

Tim: Here we go.

Jon: Son of Man continues. We spent a lot of time last hour talking about Genesis 1 and how it relates to Son of Man, and we didn't really get to how it relates to Son of Man so much, except for that being a human one is embedded in the... The nature of being a human in the creation narrative is we share the day with the animals - day six - when we were created, we both come from the earth, we're both on veggie diets. But then God said that the humans, the ones created second, will rule over—

Tim: Are God's image.

Jon: Are God's image. Yeah, are given this designation of being the reflection of who God.

Tim: The glorious, majestic status among all the creatures.

Jon: And as part of that image is given the vocation of ruling.

Tim: Ruling the animals and subduing the land, which means farming.

Jon: Farming, and coexisting with the animals.

Tim: And coexisting with the animals and bearing responsibility for them. But subduing the land means farming. Ruling the animals doesn't in Genesis 1 mean...

Jon: ...doing whatever you want to the animals.

Tim: What do you call that? Animal Husbandry.

Jon: Farming animal?

Tim: No. Because the next thing God says is, "Listen, you get the seed, you get the fruit to eat, animals get all the bushes and the grass."

Jon: It wasn't about domesticating animals to eat.

Tim: Ruling animals isn't about domesticating animals in Genesis 1.

Jon: Well, could they have domesticated animal to help them farm?

Tim: Oh, sure. There you go. But the point is about diet. It doesn't mean domesticating animals to eat them because in the ideal no creature lives at the expense of another.

Jon: The ideal is vegan.

Tim: Yes. Genesis 1 sets this up. Humans as God's representatives, and ruling the animals is a highlighted... it's element that's in the foreground - that the peaceful coexistence and responsibility for the animals ruling them is the ideal setup.

Jon: The whole reason we're having this conversation is because of this phrase "Son of Man" found in Daniel 7, where God is allowing a human to sit beside Him on a throne, and rule the earth with Him and be worshiped alongside Him.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: Which is just kind of scandalous because you worship God alone. Who's this human being worshipped?

Tim: That's one thing about Daniel 7 that's significant.

Jon: So this whole idea of God wanting to rule with a human, that starts in Genesis 1 when God creates humans and says, "Rule on my behalf. You're my image. You're my representation. So subdue the earth and rule it."

Tim: The other element of Daniel 7 is the reason the throne beside God has unoccupied...

Jon: At the beginning of the vision.

Tim: ...is because humans have become animals unleashing violence on the earth. Those are the beasts. The problem with Daniel 7 is the beast trampling the earth which are symbols of groups of humans turning themselves into kingdoms and empires and unleashing violence on the world. So the thrones are unoccupied and the people that are supposed to be occupying the throne are acting like animals, not like humans.

Again, it's all rooted in Genesis 1 imagery where humans are meant to be over the animals, but instead, sadly, they've become like the animals - less than human. How did that happen? Genesis 3 through 11 gives us the answer.

Jon: How did humans become animals? How did it go from humans being elevated over the animals to humans just acting like animals?

Tim: Specifically, in Daniel 7 in terms of types of violence.

Jon: Like crazy animals.

Tim: Irrational animal. How do we get there? Genesis 3 through 11 is perfectly designed to answer every part of that question.

[00:08:22]

Tim: So we can't do everything in Genesis 3 to 11, but let's just do a few things. First, the first sentence of Genesis 3 introduces us to a beast. It reads: "Now the snake, in Hebrew nachash, was more - I'm going to use the Hebrew word - arum than any beast of the field that the Lord God had made."

Jon: So if you could line up beasts in order of their arumness, snake's on the top of the list.

Tim: So what does arum mean if the snake is more it than any other beast?

Jon: "Crafty" is the word that's translated in most of the translations I've seen.

Tim: That's right. Here's the interesting thing. This word "arum" appears less than like 10 times in the Hebrew Bible. All of them are in the wisdom literature except for this one. And all of them are positive. In other words, for a human to be arum it's always a good thing in the wisdom literature of the Bible.

Here are two examples. Proverbs 14:15: "The naive person believes everything but the arum person, they watch their steps."

Jon: So it's being calculated?

Tim: Calculated. Proverbs 27:12: "The arum person sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple-minded keep going and they pay the penalty."

Jon: Yeah, they can see cause and effect patterns.

Tim: Perceptive. So the word "arum" is not negative. The reason why it gets translated as crafty is because in this context, an arum character is going to do something that brings death and harm to other people. But that doesn't mean the word arum is negative. It just means this creature did something negative with their arumness.

Jon: With its ability to see patterns, makes sense of things, consider things.

Tim: Consider things and make a great calculated decision to their own advantage. If the arum is able to see danger, and Ooh, I don't want that, I want to be safe, X, Y, Z decisions will land me in safety. That kind of thing. That's one thing.

The second is - I've done a lot more reflection on this on the snake. So clearly the snake is identified as a beast of the field, but also as exceptional among the beast of the field. Now, the beast of the field is a hyperlink. "The beast of the field which the Lord God had made." That's a hyperlink back to Genesis 1.

Jon: To day six?

Tim: Yeah, to day six. When did God make the beasts of the field? On day six. Before the humans. So that's interesting. The other thing is the snake obviously talks. And this isn't just like primitive fable literature where all the animals talk. To ancient readers, a talking animal, that's extremely bizarre. It's very bizarre. There's only one other talking animal in the Bible.

Jon: Yeah, Balaam's donkey.

Tim: Balaam's donkey. And that's in the context of pagan sorcery.

Jon: That's true.

Tim: So talking animals in the Bible, there's two, and both of them are associated with something more dark and connected with dark spiritual powers. That's interesting. This creature is also presented as having knowledge of God's decision. Or he pretends to have knowledge of God's decisions. But just think through. He presents himself as saying, "Listen, did God say, 'don't eat from any tree of the garden?'" There he is asking a question and he's twisting God's command. Did God say don't eat of any tree in the garden? No, it's actually the opposite.

Jon: Eat of every tree.

Tim: So the woman corrects him and say, "No, no, we can eat of the trees of the garden, but God said, 'don't eat from the fruit of that one, the one that's in the middle of the garden or touch it or else you're going to die.'" Then the serpent says the woman, "Oh, no, no, no. There's been a miscommunication. You won't die." Here's what he says, "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be open and you will be like Elohim."

Jon: You will transcend.

Tim: Think of Psalm 8 and Genesis 1. You'll be like Elohim.

Jon: We're lower than Elohim.

Tim: There's ambiguity there that is not reflected in our English translations. Remember Elohim?

Jon: Yeah. The spiritual beings.

Tim: Spiritual beings or the one chief Elohim. All of our English translations, modern translations render it as the singular chief God. You will be like the chief God. And that's a possibility. It is also possible that when you know good and evil, you'll be like us.

Jon: This class of creatures.

Tim: What is the snake? How does it know this? It's like it has insider knowledge of God's council decision making. Currently, I'm at the place where I think it's contextually you're supposed to understand that this is a member of the Divine Council. An Elohim.

Jon: Appearing as a snake.

Tim: This is an Elohim; a spiritual being depicted in the narrative here as the image of a snake because of both the meaning of that imagery. The Elohim, the spiritual beings that Isaiah sees in the Holy of holies when he has his dream vision of the Divine

Throne, they are called seraphim, but the word seraph is the word for snake. It's the word for fire and it's the word for poisonous snake. The fiery snake because it feels like fire when it bites you. So there's ambiguity there in Hebrew.

This maps on to an Egyptian religious art. A very common deity, a protector deity of the throne room is a snake with wings. It's called The Uraeus. A snake with wings.

Jon: Another kind of deity.

Tim: So snakes, divine beings—

Jon: It's a melting pot of ideas there.

Tim: Yeah, it's a matrix of ideas that for an ancient reader would have all connected. Even though it's using the image of serpent, everyone always asks, "Is it Satan?" And it's sort of like, "Well, yes and no." You're going to find out the identity of this character more as the story develops. Right now, it's important to know that it's somehow a being that has insider knowledge of God's counsel, but specifically, they are a creature. They are beast. They're a creature. And by describing it as a beast, it's setting up that this is actually the firstborn of day six, who, for one reason or another, wants to usurp the position of the second born of day six that God called to rule over.

Jon: Is it like - what's it called when you're embodied by a spirit?

Tim: Possessed?

Jon: Possessed. Is it a possessed snake?

Tim: That's a great question. It just says it's a serpent. The narrative image has two layers to it. One is the snake beast imagery, which is going to be important for the Son of Man. Because the humans instead of ruling this beast and telling it like, "No," they're going to end up being ruled by this beast. So that's the function of the beast layer of this creature's identity.

But then there's another layer where it's like, how does the snake know this? This is more than just a snake. It seems like one of these Elohim, these spiritual beings. But that is in rebellion. And you're going to have to wait till later in the biblical story.

Jon: So could you say then, in a way, the story could have had some sort of angelic being come and give this whole monologue or this whole dialogue about "You know, you didn't get the whole story? You can be like us the Elohim?"

Tim: Yes.

Jon: That would have made a lot of sense, but it wouldn't have developed a theme of the relationship of humans and animals.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: So the author kind of merge those two ideas?

Tim: Yeah. A creature that is on the narrative surface, a beast, but underneath the narrative surface is an Elohim, a spiritual being. Currently, I think that's what's going on.

Jon: Or maybe it's just a really smart snake.

Tim: Yeah. Also, it's arum. It has wisdom. Then it uses its wisdom for devious purposes. That's interesting. The humans instead of exercising authority over this beast, the humans are lured into self-destruction by this beast. So you have this ironic inversion of the ideal from Genesis 1. You have now a beast that's ruling over the humans by its craftiness.

A couple of things come out of this. Once again, it's human's vs the beast. Instead of humans, ruling the beast and peaceful coexistence, now you have an animal trying to rule the humans, they succeed. And then the famous messianic promise of Genesis 3:15 is setting out the program for the rest of the biblical storyline. And what's it about? A conflict between beasts and humans. Genesis 3:15.

So, God says to the snake, "I will set hostility between you, the serpent and the woman, between your seed, your offspring, and her seed."

Jon: Baby beasts and baby humans.

Tim: "He, that is the seed of the woman, will strike you, that is the serpent, on the head, and you, the serpent, will strike him, the seed of the woman, on the heel." Daniel 7 is this potent, cryptic little poem that's giving you the plot conflict of the biblical storyline. So from here on out, there's going to be this conflict between humans and beasts, but—

Jon: Well, metaphorically or really?

Tim: Well, what is this beast?

Jon: The Beast is a snake.

Tim: On one level it's a snake. There's a fragmenting of human's relationship to other creatures happening here. That will be one of hostility. But of course, the snake represents much more. And what on earth is the seed of the snake? It's not talking about baby snakes or human fear of snakes here.

Jon: Oh, they're talking about just the future beasts?

Tim: Also it could be about future beast. What does it mean to now be born of the snake? We have to wait for the Cain and Abel story which is going to answer that question for us. Remember, in Cain and Abel - what do you call that? Teaser? Spoiler alert - Cain gives into a beastly temptation. A temptation described as an animal.

Jon: He strikes down the heel of his brother.

Tim: He kills his brother. Be giving into the animal that is sin. So Cain becomes the model figure of the seed of the serpent. Someone who gives in to the power and influence

of beastly...the subhuman temptation to act in subhuman ways instead of ruling the beast. Man, these narratives are so packed and profound.

In Genesis 3, it's that a beast deceives the humans in to overstepping their bounds. "You could be Elohim. You don't have to settle for this mortal, depending on God's generosity, depending on God's wisdom. You can define good and evil on your own and transcend your mortal limitations. Doesn't that sound great?"

Jon: "Yeah, it sounds good."

Tim: Totally. That's what the beast does to the humans there. But once the humans do that, then they're expelled from the cosmic garden mountain. Then the next narrative is about a human also being ruled by a beast. In the Cain story is the firstborn who's angry that God has chosen his younger brother to accept his offering. Then that places Cain into decision, and what he ends up doing is acting like an animal because of sin is crouching like an animal at the door. So you have another animal crouching, trying to lure a human. And it succeeds and it results in the first act of violence.

Genesis 3 and 4 are really connected here in this humans ruling the animals or humans being ruled by them.

Jon: So humans are supposed to rule the animals. You get a story of an animal deceiving and kind of asserting power and authority over the humans and...

Tim: ...succeeds.

Jon: Then in the next story, you get a story about God choosing to bless the second born child instead of the first. It makes the first angry, Cain. So God tells Cain, "Hey, look, there's an animal who is crouching and he wants to take you out."

Tim: It's called sin.

Jon: And He calls it sin.

Tim: Not snake but sin.

Jon: And Cain decides he's going to take matters into his own hands, and sin comes, takes him out, which causes him to take his brother out and kill him. So he gives into this animal nature.

Tim: Yeah, he becomes less than human. He believes that his life can only flourish at the expense now of his brother's life.

Jon: Interesting. If you're out in the field like Abel was, the beast that could get you is probably like a snake could sneak up and bite you.

Tim: Yeah, that's interesting.

Jon: So, Cain does sneak up and he strikes Abel.

Tim: But it ends up being another human acting like an animal. I've never quite thought of this before. But again, if the Genesis 1 ideal is, "Listen, you and I can both flourish. There's plenty of food for us here. We can find a way to flourish together," then that's how I exert my rule and authority as an image of God. But in the Cain story—

Jon: "You're getting hooked up, I'm not."

Tim: "You're flourishing; I think I'm not."

Jon: "I need what you have. I'm just going to get rid of you."

Tim: Yeah, that's right. For me to flourish as a human, you have to die.

Jon: It is a zero-sum kind of way of viewing reality.

Tim: That's right. In the biblical narrative, that the fundamental portrait of a human stepping off the shared divine throne or ruling the world. Once humans choose to redefine good and evil in that kind of way, we are no longer participating in the divine rule of creation. We are asserting a beastly and animal-like rule.

Jon: So the divine rule is a nonzero sum, generous, cooperative way of life?

Tim: Yeah. Genesis 1.

Jon: Genesis 1?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Where when you say a beastly way to live, living like animals, is territorial and exerts power through violence. What else would you say?

Tim: I guess in the biblical vision it's a short-sighted view of flourishing, where if I define my own tribe and families flourishing, even if it's at the expense of another, "Oh, well, my tribes flourishing," that's a subhuman form of existence. If humans are called to be the image of God, that's a sub-human way of existing.

[00:24:54]

Tim: Just notice, again, now in Genesis 1 through 4, how much humans' relationship to animals and the creative developments of those images, how significant these are. They are really fundamental images in the biblical story.

Here's another one from Genesis 3. This is interesting. After the humans are told that there's going to be this hostility between people who give into the serpent and the seed of the woman...Let's pause real quick on that again. What that's telling us is there's going to be a future human who comes to strikes the serpent, and that human's going to be, however, in hostility with people who give into the serpent.

So there's going to be a line of humans who preserve this true humaneness, and that line's always going to be in hostility with people who are acting like animals, giving into the serpent. That's telling you that's what the whole story is going to be.

But eventually, there will be one human who will deal not just with the seed of the serpent but deal with the serpent itself. There you go. Then you just have to keep reading. That's about a Son of Man who will come.

Another point in Genesis 3 is what the consequences that God assigns to the man in Genesis 3:18 where he says, "Cursed is the ground on account of you. It will sprout thorns and thistles and you will eat the grass of the field."

Jon: That's what the animals do.

Tim: That's the diet of the animals in Genesis 1.

Jon: That's right.

Tim: In Genesis 1, humans get the fruit trees and—

Jon: And they get the seeds of the—

Tim: And vegetables. - what they farm and stuff. And the animals get the green plants of the field. Now, you're driven out into the wilderness and you're going to be forced to eat like animals.

Jon: Wow.

Tim: So humans give into an animal in Genesis 3, they are assigned to the realm of the animals, they take on the diet of animals, and then in Genesis 4 in the Cain story, they begin to act like violent animals.

Jon: This is how Nebuchadnezzar is depicted in Daniel.

Tim: Exactly right.

Jon: His hair gets long, his nails get long and he's out just eating.

Tim: He eats the grass. It's the same thing. He eats the grass of the fields.

Jon: It's the same phrase?

Tim: Yeah. Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel is being depicted as a new Adam figure who just replays Genesis 1 to 3.

Jon: And he thinks he's being like the true powerful human.

Tim: He elevates himself.

Jon: And in reality, he's becoming an animal.

Tim: Then God humbles him and makes him what he really is acting like, which is an animal in the field.

[00:28:19]

Tim: Real quick, from the Genesis 3 and 4 stuff we just did, let's just sketch through the rest of Genesis 3 and 11, which is the biblical fall narrative as a whole. Cain is expelled further—

Jon: After he kills Abel.

Tim: Yeah, after he kills Abel he's expelled and goes further east and the first thing he does is build a city. He built the city, has lots of kids, and then the seventh generation from his line is a guy named Lamech.

Jon: What does his name mean?

Tim: Well, it's not a name. There's a couple of clues here. When you read the name Lamech, and you look it up in concordance, there are only two Lamechs in the whole Bible. And it's this Lamech and then the Lamech that comes from his other brother's line.

Jon: It's not a common name.

Tim: It's not a common name. Then if you stare at it longer, in Hebrew, it's both the vowels and the letters of the Hebrew noun for king just turned backwards - inside out.

Jon: The inverted king.

Tim: He's a perverted king. He's a backwards king or the anti-king in other words. This guy Lamech, what does he do? He says, "Listen, Cain killed the guy and God put up with him."

Jon: Go put up with him and He protected him.

Tim: "So you know what? I murdered this kid the other day and I declare that God has to also put up with me seventy times seven." More or less. I'm paraphrasing. But he rewrites God's forgiveness of Cain so to speak and uses it as license for even greater murder. This is all in the context of the first human city. So there's that happening. So all of a sudden you're watching this—

Jon: That's not the kind of neighbor you want.

Tim: Totally. If Cain was becoming an animal by killing his brother, this guy, he's just like...

Jon: That guy needs to be on a watch list.

Tim: He's hell on wheels. You know what I mean? He's become less than human. He believes now that his honor is exalted by needlessly murdering another human. It's different than Cain where it's like, "Oh, I'm angry I'm jealous. I think I should have what you get." But here Lamech's just like absurd violence. It's an animal.

Jon: He turned up to eleven.

Tim: Totally. So contrast that. Then the narrative goes back. That's the line that comes from Cain. Genesis 5 gives us the line that comes from Cain's younger brother who's born in the place of the brother he murdered that is named Seth.

From Seth you get a genealogy - your favorite part of the Bible to read. Through the line of Seth, you get to the 10th generation from Adam and you get to a guy named Noah. Noah. When Noah is born, page 11—

Jon: Noah for those English speakers out there.

Tim: That's right. Noah's dad says...Actually, oh, yeah. Noah's dad, his name is Lamech too. He's the other Lamech. That's interesting.

Jon: That's interesting.

Tim: He names Noah and says, "I name him Noah, for this one will nacham us from the work and pain of our hands from the ground that the Lord has cursed." So he names Noah after the comfort. Nacham is brings to comfort or relief.

Jon: It's a wordplay.

Tim: It's a wordplay. Yeah, that's right. So we're thinking like, "Oh, well, if Lamech that came from Cain is the image of the seed of the serpent, humans acting like animals, then here's the seed of the woman - a human who is going to bring relief and comfort from the curse and from all of this."

So you get Noah - and the story of Noah and the ark is famous. God's going to bring judgment on the rebellious world, but He instructs know to make an ark. Tevah is what's called in Hebrew. The Tevah is described as a micro Eden. It's a little micro Eden.

Jon: What do you mean? Because animals are going to be in there?

Tim: Yeah. In chapter 6 verse 19, God tells Noah, "Of every living creature of all flesh, you shall bring two every kind into the ark to keep them alive with you. Male and female of birds after their kind, of the beasts, animals after they're kind, of every creeping thing on the ground after its kind. Two of every kind will come to you so you can keep them alive." So those categories of beings, you have the birds, the sky flyers, the land walkers, and the creepers.

Jon: Creepers, that's a new addition.

Tim: Oh, no, they are in Genesis 1. The creepers.

Jon: The creepers are?

Tim: Yeah. Or the crawlers. The only category not represented is the creatures in the water. They're going to be fine. So you have a human here who is going to rule the animals, which in this case means to save them. To save them. Where? In the ark.

Jon: Incubator.

Tim: So this ark becomes a little Eden 2.0, little mini Eden of the—

Jon: Little floating Eden.

Tim: The human with the animals in the divinely protected space. Then it falls along the waters and then is deposited on the mountain just like Eden in Genesis 2. In other words, Noah is becoming a possible restart of the ideal. All went downhill when human started acting like animals. But here's a human who peacefully coexist with the animal.

Jon: And he's given a new little Eden, and then we'll wipe everything clean and try again.

Tim: Yeah. So just to emphasize, why else would the narrative emphasize all this stuff about the animals in the ark? Not for children's books.

Jon: It does make a children's book material.

Tim: It makes great children's book material.

Jon: To try and answer the question, what happens to the animal?

Tim: Okay. Got it. All right. You're right. There are more and more mundane questions.

Jon: But I guess there's other questions left unanswered. One question that comes to mind is, how did he tell between a male and female lizard? There are some unanswered questions.

Tim: Many unanswered. Dude, with the flood, many unanswered questions. But they're only three narratives that depict humans at peace and living with and among the wild animals. Adam and Eve in the garden, Noah in the ark - and third one?

Jon: New creation.

Tim: Wait for it. It's on Mark 1, but we'll get there.

Jon: Oh, Mark 1.

Tim: No, we'll get there. Noah gets off the boat, bottom of page 12, and God says to Noah exactly what He said to Adam and Eve. But it was a tweak, so I guess it's not exactly what he said. "God blessed Noah and said to him and his sons, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.'" You like, "Okay."

Jon: So this is a reboot.

Tim: Full Reboot.

Jon: Full Reboot.

Tim: That's right. Now, what we expect to come next is subdue land and rule over the beast. Genesis 1. But instead what God says is, "Now the fear and terror of you will be on the beast."

Jon: New development.

Tim: Yeah. "And every moving thing that is alive, that is your food."

Jon: Off the veggies.

Tim: So the vegan ideal is over. It's as if God is here making a concession to the violent humans. Humans have shown themselves now on a path of no return.

Jon: Maybe if I let you eat animal flesh you'll calm down.

Tim: They'll stop killing each other. But it's like the humans in the story are so violent. The cause for the flood was just violence everywhere now. It's Cain and Lamech gone wild. So now humans truly believe that they have to kill other creatures to flourish. What God does is just accept that reality and now He's going to work with humans in light of that fracturing, that shattering of the ideal.

Jon: And thus we get cheeseburgers.

Tim: And thus we get cheeseburgers. Next step...Sorry, as a trail of breadcrumbs.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Basically, all I'm doing is crawling through Genesis and anything related to humans and animals, that's what I'm highlighting now. Noah gets off the boat and he gets drunk. Sketchy stuff happens with his son Ham.

Jon: So it's like the reboot's happening—

Tim: Then the new Adam—

Jon: What does the new Adam do?

Tim: He gets off the boat, all the animals are exiting and you're like, "Oh, it's Eden all over again." He plants a garden, "Yes, we love it. We love it." And he gets dreadfully drunk. Then he's naked in his tent. Drunk and naked, those are not good images from Genesis 3.

Then his one of his sons comes and quote, "Looks upon the nakedness of his father." We don't have time to go down that rabbit hole. But it's not good at all. It almost certainly means more than him just gazing upon his father.

Jon: Getting a little peek.

Tim: What significant about that, why I'm highlighting that is in the genealogy that follows in the line of Ham, we're told that Ham had a grandson whose name was Nimrod.

Jon: Ham is one of Noah's sons?

Tim: Yeah. Ham had a grandson. In the genealogy of Genesis 10, there's a narrative that the genealogy stops and it focuses on this guy's grandson, Nimrod.

Jon: It's unfortunate name.

Tim: Totally. What we're told is he was a mighty warrior, he's a violent dude, he's a manslayer, and he's a hunter.

Jon: And a beast slayer.

Tim: Yeah, manslayer and a beast slayer. He's the first killer of animals mentioned in the Bible.

Jon: Actually, isn't God the first killer of animals in the Bible?

Tim: Well, human. He's the first one.

Jon: First human?

Tim: That's right. My point is Cain offers the firstborn from his flock.

Jon: Oh, so he kills an animal.

Tim: That's right. But here it's not like in a priestly or worship kind of role. It's hunting. The phrase is right next to "he's a mighty warrior, he's a manslayer and he's a mighty hunter." He kills man and beast. So he's not only acting like a beast—

Jon: Wait a second. Cain was raising animals to eat. He was supposed to be doing that.

Tim: But it doesn't say that. It just says he was a worker. Excuse me. Abel was a keeper of sheep.

Jon: Abel was doing it.

Tim: Yeah, Abel not Cain. Sorry.

Jon: Sorry, that's a detour but—

Tim: And then he offers a firstborn of his flock as an act of worship.

Jon: So has he raising these for what?

Tim: It doesn't say.

Jon: For wool?

Tim: Yeah, you can raise sheep for wool. That's a good point. Abel's animal husbandmen—

Jon: I mean, I asked you this before if there was anything sniffing there. It just feels like—

Tim: Actually, I do think there is now. I've been thinking about it. Where they're bringing their offerings to, that whole story assumes that we are worshipping Yahweh with offerings. What's that all about? Where? By the entrance of Eden, apparently,

because Adam and Even just camped out, they just went to the East of Eden. And then that's where this story takes place. And then Cain goes further east.

So is that where they're offering sacrifices? There's Jewish legends about this Second Temple literature about them depicting this scene as happening before the cherubim. Like they're offering it at the door trying to...

Jon: Trying to win the way back in?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That's interesting.

Tim: It is interesting. This is the way these narratives work obviously through the gaps.

Jon: But I just find it fascinating that God tells them the ideal is you don't kill things. And then Abel who God decides to bless is the one who actually kills an animal.

Tim: He kills an animal and he got accepted.

Jon: And God accepts it and He chooses it as a better offering. Well, not a better offering.

Tim: He regards it.

Jon: But He blesses Abel.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: So not only does it seem unfair that Abel's the second born, it kind of seems unfair in that "What were you doing killing an animal?" I find it interesting.

Tim: I think that's very interesting. There's probably more there that I haven't thought about and we haven't talked about. But Nimrod's the first hunter.

Jon: Nimrod just goes and slays the beast.

Tim: Yeah, totally. Why are we told these random details? That he's a mighty warrior and a mighty hunter. It's the first things we're told about Ham's grandsons.

Jon: It's little color.

Tim: The second thing that we're told is that he built Babylon. The beginning of his kingdom was Babylon. From that land, he went to Assyria and built Nineveh. So the grandson of Ham becomes the archetypal—

Jon: This violent man created these two empires.

Tim: And the two empires are going to carry Israel into exile in the later biblical narrative. Assyria will take out the northern tribes and Babylon will take out Judah and Jerusalem. Again, these narratives in Genesis 1 through 11 are designed to set you

up to understand the cosmic and significance of everything that's going to happen in the story that follows.

Jon: These cities were founded by a violent man who are part of this cycle of giving into the beastly urge to rule and destroy.

Tim: Correct. The point is if you follow the narrative thread of these humans giving into the beast, humans acting like beast, it leads you to Nimrod and the founding of Babylon and Assyria.

Jon: In the DNA of these towns.

Tim: Then all of a sudden, why Babylon and Assyria are going to be given so much airtime in the rest of the narratives of Hebrew Bible is precisely this. They become portraits of this of the snake and the snake seed - people giving into the snake, acting like animals.

In Daniel's dream, the first beast of his dream is explicitly labeled as Babylon. So all that's rooted in these narratives of Genesis. You have the humans are the line through which humanity will be restored to its rule, and you have the humans who are acting like beast, which is most of them.

Jon: And ironically, the line by which the humans are to be restored also end up acting like animals.

Tim: Totally. Even the promised, chosen ones, act like animals and snakes. Because they're humans. Because they're humans.

Jon: Oh, humans.

Tim: Oh, humans. So you walk away from Genesis 1 through 11 with a full concept of that divine throne beside God that He wanted to elevate humans to as His image that is now an unoccupied throne like in Daniel's dream.

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: What humans are being, is not humans, but beasts unleashing violence and death in the world. And what we are looking for is the fulfillment of that promise of Genesis 3:15 of a human. They're called the seed of the woman. Who's that going to be? A son of Adam. And Adam is the word for man. The Son of Man. Then you read Genesis 3 looking for a Son of Man who will overcome the beast and take up humanities—

Jon: Strike its head.

Tim: Strike the beast head, reverse everything that it's done, and actually fulfill what humanity is calling is in the first place. Genesis 1 through 11.

Jon: We're looking for a human who can partner with God.

Tim: That's right. And as it turns out, no human is qualified for the task. Even the best ones like Moses, Abraham, Noah, David, they all get crossed off the list. And so, in the larger sweep, what happens is that God becomes embodied as the kind of human that He's called humanity to be. And He is that on their behalf. Genesis 1 through 11. It's all in there.

Jon: It is packed.

Tim: We just had 4th July. Sorry to be American centric to our international listeners.

Jon: It's the day we celebrate America's Independence.

Tim: Americans waste huge amounts of money on exploding...

Jon: You know, it really bugs me when someone's like, "You could have just let a \$20 bill on fire." It's like, "That's not as fun as blowing up \$20 worth of fireworks. It's not as fun."

Tim: No, it's not. Fireworks are pretty amazing. Anyway, one of it was these little...they were shaped like little plastic bottles with the string at the bottom neck, and you hold it and pull it out and it just brrh. It was one of those. I couldn't believe how much stuff they packed into that. So much stuff came out. I mean, it was only like this big. Like the size of my hands.

Jon: It's like a clown car.

Tim: It was like a clown car. So much confetti. I was sweeping our driveway for like 20 minutes. Anyway. Genesis 1 through 11 is like that. It's just everything's.

Jon: It's an overstuffed popper.

Tim: Everything's in it.

Jon: Thanks for listening to this episode of The Bible Project podcast. If you're enjoying this series, you might also enjoy our sister podcast called Exploring my Strange Bible. It's a collection of sermons and teachings over the last decade that Tim has done in many different settings. Also, we are launching a new website that has all of our resources on it. Check it out at thebibleproject.com. We've got our videos, study notes, these podcasts and a lot more.

Today's show was edited and produced by Dan Gummel. The music is by the band Tents. We're a nonprofit in Portland, Oregon. We believe the Bible is one unified story that leads to Jesus. We're crowdfunded and so we do all of this. We create all of this material and we have it free for anyone to use because of the generous support of people like you. So thanks for being a part of this with us.

Simon: Hey, my name is Simon and I'm living in Vienna, Austria. I love The Bible Project so much that I actually chose to translate it into German. I'm actually here with my good friend Philip who is the leader of The German Bible Project.

Phillip: Hello, my name is Phillip I love the Bible Project because I love to train people in Germany to laugh Jesus Christ.

Simon: We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. We're a crowdfunded project by people like me. Find free videos, podcasts, study notes, and more at thebibleproject.com.