

Exile Q&R

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Speakers in the audio file:

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- Jon: We've been talking about the exile for a long time.
- Tim: Yeah, we have.
- Jon: There was six episodes that we released, and I heard some great feedback on Twitter and other social channels that people really liked it. This is hidden theme.
- Tim: Yeah, totally. The sleeper.
- Jon: The sleeper cell theme.
- Tim: And then once it wakes up, you can't ever put it back to bed because it affects how you see everything in the Bible.
- Jon: I love how it all comes to this culmination of the way of the exile, which is very practical. It's extremely practical.
- Tim: In fact, it generated a new video idea that we didn't have a planned.
- Jon: Right. Well, I wondered if we thought the exile video would cover it.
- Tim: That's a good point.
- Jon: And then it didn't. We wrote an exile video, which is still in the works, and it's going to come out soon, but it just gets as far as showing how Babylon is a type and how we still live in Babylon and Jesus is forging the way home.
- Tim: That's right. The narrative art. What we weren't able to include, just for time and focus, was all the stuff about the wisdom warrior and the ethics of God's people living in exile, in Daniel, Jeremiah, 1 Peter. So we decided we're going make a video just about that. The way of an exile or the way of the exile.
- Jon: That's kind of the title that's been sticking.
- Tim: Yeah, we'll figure it out. Anyway. That's great. That's been really productive theme and conversation for us.
- Jon: Yeah. We wrote it so we're going to make it.
- Tim: The ball's rolling.
- Jon: We got questions from you guys that we want to get through. Let's just get to it.
- Tim: Great. The first one is from Austin, who lives in Cedar Hill, Texas. This is his question.

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Austin: Hey, guys. This is Austin from Cedar Hill, Texas. My question is kind of about the line "This is my home, but not my home," and about the concept of a "new heavens and new earth."

I have used this to make the point that we should take better care of this earth because we're going to be living on it for the long haul. But doesn't the fact that it's going to be renewed imply that God, no matter how good or bad of stewards we've been, is going to make it hospitable for the long haul for eternity? Thank you so much. Bye.

Tim: It's a really good question.

Jon: It's a good question. I definitely grew up in my tradition, which was, don't go out of your way to trash this place, but it is a sinking ship that God has to completely redeem, so there's really no point in polishing the brass on the Titanic.

Tim: Right. Usually, it's put in a hierarchy of priorities. If God's going to remake the earth, we'll just leave that to Him. We'll make our priority other things related to the great commission or something like that. You know, planting churches, and making disciples. We end up playing these priorities off each other because of our paradigm or categories for new creation.

Jon: If you had a choice between preserving a forest and planting a church in the Amazon where people get know Jesus, what's more important?

Tim: I'm not sure even placing it...First of all, whoever has that choice in front of them?

Jon: Who said you could only do one or two things with your life?

Tim: Yeah, totally. Two, I just think even the way Jesus frame the great commission, "As you're going out to the nations, make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Which in Matthew, is referring primarily to the Sermon on the Mount, which is all about how you live together - like relationships with God and with other people as you live together in communities. Which presumes loving your neighbor as yourself certainly doesn't involve neglecting the land that you live on.

Jon: Sure.

Tim: It's mostly modern Westerners who we are so disconnected from the actual ground that we live on, you know, psychologically sure that we would even ask a question like that.

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Jon: This is a very modern problem. I mean, no other time in human history did you have to think like—

Tim: "Mm-hmm, should we take care of the environment?"

Jon: Well, or did you even have the ability to make such an impact on the environment? It probably wasn't until the industrial revolution that we could—

Tim: Although, I was just reading a book to my son the other day about the whole history of the buffalo on the American continent and how there were 75 million before the pioneer era. And within like 50, 70 years, the population went down to a few thousand because—

Jon: Was this pre-Industrial Revolution, then pioneer era?

Tim: Well, I'm just saying it was the Wild West. They didn't have any factories in Ohio. Ohio was a grass plant.

Jon: They didn't have any meat factories?

Tim: Yeah. It was just hundreds of thousands of settlers just slaughtering the buffalo in huge numbers because they didn't run away from people. That's an example. The effect that that had or at least the argument this book was making was saying that that was the ultimate creation of the dust ball that brought about a big part of the Great Depression because the land didn't have this animal population to—

Jon: That was fertilizing it.

Tim: I know that is about the shape of the hooves. The shape of the buffalo hooves would pierce the ground and aerate it so that water could get into the deep roots. And the moment those populations were gone—

Jon: They're also pooping all over the ground.

Tim: Totally. Anyway, so there's a rabbit trail. But it's an example that even in a point in American history, where you didn't have factories pumping, you know, whatever, clouds of smoke into the sky, it was humans really, really not paying attention to the ecological web.

Jon: Let's get back to his question, which is—

Tim: Yeah. Sorry. But it's related, I think.

Jon: Totally it's related.

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Tim: The survival of the buffalo, should that have been a priority for the followers of Jesus, who are out there, settling in the middle east?

Jon: And the argument is, God's got a lot of work to do, so what's a couple more buffalo?

Tim: If God's going to...whether you think he's going to destroy it, and make a brand new presto, heavens on earth - that's a popular conception - or what we've been trying to draw attention to are the biblical passages that talk about the continuity between our earth. Like in Romans 8, it's liberated existence into freedom and what it's supposed to be. Which means there's continuity.

Here, I feel like I'm kind of a broken record, because it's the way that I know how to answer the question is, remember the paradigm for this age into the new age, this creation to the new creation. The paradigm the apostles have isn't something they learned from a crystal ball. It's them working out what they experienced in meeting the risen Jesus. And then reading the scriptures in light of that.

So what they read in the prophets of a new creation is of a land flowing with milk and honey, and new cities and children playing in the streets. Isaiah 65, Zachariah 14, all those passages. So it's very much an earthy place and it's depicted in terms of life as we know it in this world, but just freed from corruption, fear, and violence.

Then, two, they met the risen Jesus, who was the Jesus they knew. He had a body. His body still had on it the marks of the history of that body before it was raised from the dead. It had the nail marks, it had the facial features. So there's continuity between the old creation Jesus, so to speak, and the new creation Jesus.

I can't imagine Jesus or the apostles not caring about Jesus's body before the resurrection and be like, "It's just going to get remade so I'll just eat terribly."

Jon: It's kind of like, let's say you're in college, and your parents are like, "Hey, we're going overseas. We're going to live overseas for a year, but you can live in the house. And by the way, when we come back, we're doing a big remodel."

At the back of your mind, you're thinking, "Okay, well, then I don't need to worry about keeping this place clean because they're going to come back and they're going to have to kind of demolish a lot of stuff and remodel anyway." I think that's kind of the paradigm that people have.

Tim: I guess so. However, to be complete, the analogy would be, "and you are going to become the main caretaker of the new remodeled house." So what you've done by not caring in that year is created a whole set of habits about how you relate to the house you live in.

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Jon: That's huge.

Tim: And those habits die hard.

Jon: They're not going to get sucked out of you in new creation?

Tim: Well, yeah. I mean, what humans are doing in the new creation on the last page of the Bible is ruling and reigning.

Jon: Right. Which was what they were intended to do.

Tim: Which is rebooting what page 1 was all about - image of God, humans ruling and reigning. Just in terms of character formation, if spent a lifetime completely having nowhere on your radar my connectedness to the ground and this place that I live, I don't think that's a healthy way to be a human. That's going to have to fundamentally be remade in whatever.

Jon: That's interesting. So you think we're going to bring our habits into new creation?

Tim: I don't know. What I'm trying to do is answer the question through the paradigm of Jesus's resurrection. Because that's what the apostles were doing is thinking it all through in light of the resurrection.

Actually, here's one other example I just thought of. When Paul the Apostle at the end of his most important discussion on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, he has this whole conversation about the resurrection and it's real, and Jesus was risen in a transformed body, but a real body. So he concludes that whole discussion in verse 58 of 1 Corinthians 15 with this line. He says, "Therefore, my beloved family, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

What is the work of the Lord and laboring in the Lord? He makes it really clear in other letters. Like in Colossians, "Whatever you do, do it in the name of Jesus." Or when he's talking about slaves and masters. He calls just day to day work, "doing it for the Lord or in the Lord." Paul has this idea that any of our daily activities can either be done for ourselves or become the work of the Lord.

Then here, he says, "Hey, go to work tomorrow. Keep working your day to day lives in the Lord." Then this line, "You know your labor isn't in vain because of the resurrection."

Jon: Interesting. The perspective of polishing the brass on a sinking ship is that it's in vain, don't do it.

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- Tim: Totally.
- Jon: What's the point?
- Tim: Paul makes the exact opposite. "Your day to day work and labor is not in vain."
- Jon: Wouldn't someone read that and go, "Well, he's obviously talking about spiritual work"?
- Tim: Church planting.
- Jon: Church planting and disciple-making.
- Tim: Yeah, totally. So here, let me just...he because he uses this phrase, "the work of the Lord" in a number of other places, here's one. In Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, do your work with a whole heart as for the Lord rather than for humans, because you know that it's from the Lord that you'll receive the reward of your inheritance." He's not talking about ministry. He's talking about going to work tomorrow morning.
- Jon: How do you know that?
- Tim: Just in the context. He's talking about wives and husbands, children and parents, and then here, slaves and masters.
- Jon: So the workplace?
- Tim: Which was like 80% of the population were in slave-master relationship.
- Jon: And that was their work.
- Tim: It's the labor force. He's talking about, "Hey, if you're a slave and you don't—
- Jon: And you're cleaning up the property of your master...
- Tim: Yes. You're cleaning up the property, he says, "Do it for the Lord because you're actually working for the Lord." It's the work of the Lord. I know that even saying that English phrase, "the work of the Lord" sounds like —
- Jon: Spiritual. I mean, it sounds like it's not talking about cleaning someone toilet.
- Tim: It sounds like working at a church or leading a Bible study. But he explicitly uses this phrase "working for the Lord" to talk about going to work in the morning.
- Jon: Cleaning up someone's barn.

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Tim: Yeah, totally. I just rented a car and had returned it this morning. It's like, these are awesome guys. It was really awesome. It was these three guys, they were all making these jokes. It was such a fun environment to go return the keys. It's so lad [SP]. They were trying to make an awesome workplace. And that matters, because it's people in relationship. Anyway.

My point is, Paul has a story in his head about the liberation of our world into its new creation form. For him, he says, "that makes my day to day work and labor, not in vain." He has some idea that there's continuity, that the things I do now can have a lasting contribution into the illustration.

Jon: Now, I can work in such a way that is not great for the environment but is great for the bottom line. Then I can use that money to help people, and I can do that for the Lord. I could drill oil for the Lord in places that some people might not want me to.

Tim: Well, that's a good point. I don't think you can create a theory that applies to every particular decision.

Jon: I mean, this is where the rubber hits the road for a lot of people and then it gets political. But how much am I supposed to make sure the environment, this planet is healthy with how I work?

If you look at the thing that I have been coming back to a lot is just the vocational call in Genesis 2, which is to rule the earth and subdue it, and be image of God, reign on God's behalf. So if you use that paradigm, it seems like you would want to make it a really beautiful planet.

Tim: Or Jeremiah create little garden of Eden in Babylon. Remember Jeremiah 29 for the exile theme?

Jon: Right.

Tim: Create little pockets of Eden to the best of your ability. They'll always be frustrated by your own limitations and lack foresight, but that doesn't mean you don't do it. I mean, somebody who lives in a rural area or just in a different culture where they actually do grow some of their own food, they would just look at our conversation be like, "What are you talking? You're talking as if your very life isn't connected to the health of the ground."

That's what we're talking about. We're like, "Should we care about the health of the ground or should we not?" For most of human history, and even right now...

Jon: Or the health of the air or the health or the health of the water.

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- Tim: ...it's just like, "What an odd conversation?" We're so disconnected or our thinking is separated that somehow my well-being and my neighbor's well-being can be talked about separately from the quality of the air or the ground.
- Jon: That's true.
- Tim: It's odd.
- Jon: It is odd.
- Tim: I'm just observing myself having this conversation and this is not a normal way to talk about our environment.
- Jon: We didn't solve that, but I think those were good thoughts.
- Tim: I do want to very much pushback on the way of thinking of the story of the Bible that says, "God's going to restore it, or make a brand new one so how I think about how I relate and how my culture or community relates to the ground doesn't actually matter that much." I don't see that anywhere in the Bible.
- Jon: It would be like you could have the same logic for your body, which is if God can give me a new body, then I will just trash my body."
- Tim: Totally.
- Jon: Like, "Who cares how trashed my body gets? God will make it new?" But your body's a temple.
- Tim: And it's just that's irresponsible. Think of all of the opportunities that you're shutting down for later in life by not taking care of your body, all these ways that you could express love for God and neighbor in your 70s and 80s, but whatever, you've had all these health problems now, because you ate crap your whole life. I don't know, whatever. You know what I'm saying?
- Jon: Oreos are delicious. All right. Let's go to this next question. This is Rebecca Edwards from Texas.
- Rebecca: Hey, Jon and Tim. This is Rebecca from Texas. My question is about the 12 tribes of Israel, especially post-exile. So much of the history of Israel revolves around tribe identity, but other than Paul identifying as a Benjamite and the temple priestess, Anna from the tribe of Asher in the Gospel of Luke, not much is mentioned in the New Testament.

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I just wondered how important was tribe identity both right after the return from exile, and if it even exists today. Thanks so much. Love supporting y'all and so appreciative of the podcasts and all the videos. Keep it up. Thanks.

Tim: Great question, Rebecca. We even have a note from someone on our team who highlighted your question. Thanks. It's actually a historically complicated issue. The tribes were the organizational principle for the land boundaries, from Joshua on through the kingdom period.

Though, if you notice in reading Samuel, Kings, people are always connected to the tribe, the people that you read about in the stories, but certain tribes just kind of dropped out of the story. You just don't quite hear about them anymore. There's Zebulun or Gad. People from these tribes appear in the stories but the lands aren't quite mentioned and so on.

Then, in theory, the exile was the deportation of many of these inhabitants, and many of them just never came back. When you get to the post-exile books, and really our main source here is Ezra and Nehemiah, you do have real awareness of people's family lines. There are genealogies of people who returned. So it's clear that people's family, tribal identity was still maintained through the exile, at least for the people that returned. And there are records of that in Ezra and Nehemiah.

Jon: Because when they're in exile, their tribes no longer connected to the land in the same way, but it's still there. The family—

Tim: Yeah, it's a family. Yeah, totally. We're Zebulunites and we're Naphthalim. Ezra and Nehemiah is an important contribution to that whole...it's post-exile and these people really still care about their family identities as a part of the larger tribal makeup.

Once you get into the New Testament, that's true. Obviously, the apostles want to make really clear that Mary and Joseph and therefore Jesus are connected to the family line of David, which is Judah. Then Rebecca. You mentioned the two others. Paul identifies as from the tribe of Benjamin and then Anna, the prophets in Luke chapter two is from Asher.

I think even though it's not mentioned as much, is still a very traditional culture. And you don't need some ancient genealogy database when your first memories is of your parents telling you, "Yeah, we're Asherites. We're Danites." In other Second Temple Jewish literature, people still are aware and care about tribal identities. You read in the book of Maccabees, people are totally tracking with their family identity.

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There is an interesting story about King Herod. Herod the Great, tried to kill baby Jesus and that whole thing in Matthew. He was half Israelite, and then at least from the records that survive that his mom was an Edomean from Edom, the Edomite family. And so people were suspicious of him.

There's is a couple of historical testimonies that he actually had a whole bunch of genealogy records in the temple of Jerusalem burned to try and cover up his ancestry. There, it's clear even in the time of Jesus and ancestry matters so much though that he's going to burn up records. And there's still Jewish traditions and family still today. I mean there are families that preserve their Levi priestly heritage.

Jon: Really?

Tim: Oh, yeah. The majority of Jews by the time of Jesus weren't even living in the land of Israel. They were living outside. So even if Herod burned those records—

Jon: They still have records.

Tim: Yeah. It's just like, "How do I know that I'm from the Mackie tribe of Scotland?" Well, my name, Mackie.

Jon: That's the main way people track this stuff now.

Tim: Yeah. Stuff can get muddled but it's not a very likely thing that you just forget what family line you're from when you come from such a culture that values that kind of thing. I do think the exile scrambled probably lots of things when you have children, their parents were killed in the takeover when the Assyrians came, and so you're orphaned and sold as a slave in Nineveh. I'm sure there are thousands of those stories where people lost track.

Jon: Isn't the tribes...did they take some sort of central role in new creation in the revelation? Are the tribes referred to? How important is the preservation of tribe, the 12 tribes as it relates to living as exiles and waiting for new creation?

Tim: Well, this was the big debate in all our conversations about the book of Acts. I think they are coming out on the podcast pretty soon - with Acts videos coming out this year. But this was a huge debate in the first generation of the Jesus movement because this is a Jewish messianic movement. Jesus is Israel's Messiah.

So if you're going to follow the Jewish Messiah, don't you have to take on Jewish identity? Eat kosher, men circumcised, Sabbath, all that. And where the apostles landed on that was no. The family of Abraham was always meant to be a multi-

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ethnic covenant family. So following Jesus is your faith and Jesus and baptism is your way of joining the family of Abraham. That's where they landed.

You see you see that in the Apostle Paul's letters. That's why I get so angry when people non-Jews thought they had to be circumcised to become a part of the family of God. In the early church, Jewish people who were following Jesus, their tribal identity mattered to them because of their family history. It had nothing to do with their membership in the family of Abraham of the new covenant that was being formed through Jesus. So the tribal identity matters, but it's not crucial.

Jon: What about the 144,000? Isn't that 12 times 12 with a couple of zeros?

Tim: That's right, 144,000. That's the vision that John has about the Constitution of the new covenant people of God, he sees this vision of...Actually, he doesn't see, he hears. He hears a report that the new covenant family of Abraham, and he hears the roster of the 12 tribes, 12,000 from each tribe. It's a very structured, very similar to the roster census in the book of Numbers from the Old Testament. That's what he hears.

Then what he says is, he turns and then he looked to see this group of people, and what he sees is a great multitude from every tribe, language, tongue, and nation, white robes, singing praises of the Lamb. What John hears, and then what he sees is a repeated motif throughout the whole book. We talked about this before.

Jon: We talked about that.

Tim: Some people debate. Some people think that there's actually going to be this reconstitution of the 12 tribes. So that would be people who their view is connected with what's called a pre-millennial word, sometimes dispensational approach to the book of Revelation.

Another view would be that the 144,000 are a symbol of the new renewed covenant family of Abraham, which consists in reality of the multi-ethnic family of Jesus. In that case, there are Jewish people in the family of Jesus, because they place their faith in the Messiah, and they care about their tribal identity. And they should, and that's awesome. Just like I should care about mine. But it's not of covenantal significance, I guess. At least not to the apostles. They don't seem to highlight that. It's a great question.

Jon: Cool. This next question is from Jonathan from Darwin, Australia.

Jonathan: Hi, Tim and Jon. My name is Jonathan and I'm from Darwin, Australia. I was wondering if the concept of exile also applies to our whole beings, physical bodies,

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and consciousness in the sense that I am who I am although I'm not fully myself because I await renewal.

Tim: What a good question.

Jon: I don't know if I fully understand the question.

Tim: We touched on this just in one part of our conversation - I don't remember - about being a stranger in your own body.

Jon: Right, yeah.

Tim: So it's applying the storyline of exile of the Israelites who returned back into the land but it wasn't home. It was home - lowercase 'h' home, but not upper case 'H' Home.

Jon: This is my body—

Tim: Then we use that as a model to like...this becomes the paradigm of being at home, but not at Home. And you could apply that to where you live. You can also apply it to the form of our body - how we experience being human right now and the way of thinking about "this is me, but also not the me that will come about in the new creation."

Jon: Sure. And that becomes very obvious as you get older.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: My neck, as I've been trying this new workout, it just gets so stiff and I'm hoping it doesn't get stiff in the new creation.

Tim: Yeah, right.

Jon: I mean, especially if you have an illness or something, chronic pain, physical body, I think we get it. Like it's corrupted. There's something that we all expect will be renewed. But it's interesting he brought up consciousness.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: The way that I experience being me, being aware of everything, is there something fundamentally flawed with that that's going to be renewed too?

Tim: Yeah. Maybe without using the category of flawed, I'm just saying, limited. Like my consciousness right now is limited to the hardware of my physical brain, my body. My experience of being human and my moods, my desires, that push me to make

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certain decisions or to have to resist them to make certain decisions, that's all connected to my actual physical structure.

So if the new creation and my resurrection existence is going to be a shift in my hardware, I think that will reshape how my consciousness experiences the world because the instrument through which I experienced the world will be—

Jon: Tuned in a different way.

Tim: Yeah. Again, resurrected Jesus, it was him, but it was a transformed version of him that had capacities that pre-resurrection Jesus didn't have. I have to think that the way that we are even conscious of ourselves, and our existence in the world will undergo a transformation.

I've often thought this looking at insect eyes or chameleons. They can move their eyes in these crazy ways, and it's just like, "Oh, well, what if I..." I mean, you wonder this stuff as a kid. "What if I could perceive what was behind me and in front of me at the same time? How would that change my experience of the world and how I perceive myself?"

Jon: I do that every day with a backup camera in my car.

Tim: The question is, there's a concept that exile apply to our whole beings.

Jon: Are we exiles of our own consciousness? Is there an awakening of our inner experience? In one sense, it's very obvious that there would be in that even now before new creation, you can open up your consciousness.

That sounds very hippy-dippy, but like by becoming more aware of your body, more aware of your thoughts, more aware of your surroundings, you're adapting your consciousness and you're becoming more at home with it. Which people do through prayer, people do through mindfulness, meditation. People do it all different ways. And you realize, "Oh, man, my experience can be dramatically changed through my practices."

Tim: I see.

Jon: I could go through the same day and experience it completely differently depending on—

Tim: You don't even have to switch out your brain.

Jon: You don't even have to switch out your brain?

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Tim: Yeah, that's right. You can create habits of consciousness of how you interpret and experience a conversation. You can have fundamentally different experiences with the same you that's sitting here right now.

Jon: So how much more can you have a different experience with a new body or renewed, resurrected, transformed body? It would be a different experience, which is exciting. More connected to who you are, more connected to other people, more connected to what's going around on around to you, less prone to maybe certain modes and heuristics that limit you to really knowing what's going on.

Tim: I was just listening to an interesting conversation podcast. Actually, it's a great podcast. People should know about this podcast. It's called "OnScript." There's a guy named Matthew Lynch, and he's got some other people, Erin Heim.

Basically, they're both Bible scholarship nerds, they're grad students, and they just scheduled interviews with important biblical scholars and they just interview them about their work and about their lives. It's so good.

Anyway, they're interviewing scholar named Carol Newsom, who's been a professor for many years at Emory University. She's working on a project right now; she's going to call it The genealogy of the Biblical Self. Something like that. But it's essentially she's using anthropology about how different cultures create different types of consciousness, a senses of the self, in both throughout history and even today, about how different types of cultures, Eastern cultures tend to cultivate consciousness that's way more relational - where people's self-identity is defined in terms of their relationships to their family and their community, whereas Western selves tend to be more independent and individualistic.

That's just on the planet right now. Think throughout history, the different concepts of the self. So she wants to do this genealogy of ancient Israelite concepts of the self.

Jon: That's cool. What do you mean genealogy?

Tim: Like a history. If you can go back to the earliest stages of biblical literature, how do people talk and think about the human self? And trace it through to the exile period, and then post-exile, and then on to the Apostle Paul.

Jon: I want to read that.

Tim: Yeah, it sounds fascinating. Her argument is that people talk and conceive of themselves and you can tell a story about how concept to the self-developed

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throughout history in the Bible. That's another type of example. We're even with the same human body, but depending on—

Jon: The of vocabulary you use, the mental constructs that you adopt are going to change the way you actually experience reality.

Tim: If you see the fundamental problems of the world as outside yourself or inside yourself, am I the problem or are they the problem? Or is that something is our problem? Different cultures have different ways of approaching that. It's such an interesting conversation. That again touches on this issue of being in exile in my own body.

Jon: And in my own mind.

Tim: And in my own mind. And that there are other ways to exist and be conscious of myself. For sure, the new creation will have to have a dramatic impact on my experience of myself. Which is so—

Jon: It is exciting.

Tim: It is exciting. That's exactly the word that was in my head was to think that my current way of experiencing the world, at least as a Westerner, being so disconnected and selfish. I don't have to be this way and I can begin to cultivate a new type of self in the power of the Spirit even right now.

Jon: The point is that new creation is flooding in and we can start to taste it and experience it.

Tim: That's right. Loving your neighbor, prioritizing the well-being of another life other than my own, that's a shift of consciousness in a way. That other people are as important or more important than me. I think I'm going to be working on that one till the day I die. That's a shift of consciousness in a way. It's a great question.

Jon: It's a great question. Thanks, Jonathan.

Tim: Thanks, Jonathan.

Jon: Another Jonathan from Medford, Oregon.

Tim: Jonathan Floyd.

Jon: We got we got Jonathan from the other corner of the world and then Jonathan from just down the road, Medford.

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Tim: That's right.

Jonathyn: Hi Tim. Hi Jon. My name is Jonathan Floyd. I'm recording from Medford, Oregon. I was wondering how repentance plays into the theme of exile. In the Old Testament, we see the prophets constantly speaking to Israel, telling them that God was communicating that if they would repent and turn back to Him, He would bring them back to Himself.

John the B and Jesus, both preached repentance and it's also all throughout the apostles' writings. I was wondering if that's something that plays into this theme or not. And if so, how? Thanks, guys. Appreciate everything you guys are doing.

Tim: It's a good question. The theme of repentance throughout the prophets and the New Testament, how does it relate to the exile storyline of returning from exile into your new home? It's a good question. This really connected. It's helpful to remember that the word repentance is a metaphorical translation of the word shuv. In Hebrew, it means literally to turn around. It's a literal like a walking image.

Jon: If you're going one way and I said, "Hey, repent," you might be like, "Come back and walk over here."

Tim: Yeah, totally. If you just say, "shuv" it just means to turn around.

Jon: Interesting.

Tim: It's the actual word for you're walking down the street and if you shuv it means you turn and go a different direction. Which means that you can shuv away from something and you can shuv to something. It has nothing to do with your direction, it has to do with just your turning.

Jon: The pivot.

Tim: The pivot. Shuving away from the Lord is one of the most common images in the prophets to talk about apostasy.

Jon: You can repent from the Lord.

Tim: Yeah, you repent from the Lord.

Jon: How is that usually translated?

Tim: Turn away.

Jon: Turn away?

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Tim: Yeah. Whereas you can shuv to the Lord and that would be...it's often calling repenting or turn back to the Lord. Of all the prophets, the book of Jeremiah has the word shuv the most. He's constantly doing wordplay and puns on it because turning back, turning towards.

Then the word that gets translated as apostasy in our English translations of the prophets is a noun from the word "shuv." It's meshuvah - turning away - as a noun. You're turning away.

Jon: How's that a noun? That's a verb.

Tim: Turning away. Oh, I guess act of turning away. It makes good sense in Hebrew. It's just your meshuvah. It's the thing that you do that constitutes turning away.

Jon: Your constant turnings.

Tim: Yeah, your turnings away.

Jon: Your turnings away. What would be the English word? The way you turn?

Tim: Apostasy, which means to turn away from. Apostasy. In a religious sense.

Jon: But not the action of turning away but—

Tim: The thing that you have done that is an act of turning away.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Which is usually idolatry and social injustice towards the poor, and the prophets.

Jon: Your shuviness.

Tim: Yeah, your meshuvah.

Jon: Your meshuvah to be more precise.

Tim: Jonathyn's question was about how this relates to the exile theme. And it does. Their shoving away from the Lord is what was a violation of the covenant, and that's what got them booted into Babylon. Now that you're in Babylon, your shoving back to the Lord is what will bring about the restoration and return back to the land. And the return to the land is shuv. Returning. Turning back to the land is shuv.

One of the most important passages about this is in the Torah, in Deuteronomy 30, where Moses says, "I know you guys are going to shuv away from the Lord and

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you're going to end up in exile." Then he says, "When you're in the land of your exile, and you remember the Lord your God and shuv to Him, turn back to Him."

Jon: Repent to him.

Tim: He says, "When you turn back to Him and love Him with all of your heart, soul, and strength, he brings up the Shema." In other words, when you're in exile, and you'll be like, "Oh, that's terrible. Gosh, let's never do this again, let Shema back, shuv back by fulfilling the Shema," then he says. "The Lord will regather you from all of the nations."

However, the whole problem was that Israel throughout the story never fully performed the Shema. In the storyline, they didn't love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. The problem was even when they did shuv back to the Lord like in the Judges, it's the cycle of the judges, they'd worship idols and what whatever, turn away, and then they would shuv back. But then they would shuv from their shuving. They would repent of their repentance.

Jon: The shuv cycle.

Tim: It's the shuv cycle. It seems like the name of laundromat. Shuv cycle. Anyway. The whole problem is they're shuving never sticks. Their repentance never stick.

Jon: They're just spinning in cycles.

Tim: Which is why they're sitting in Babylon. The next line after saying, "When you're in exile, and you turn back to the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength so you can live," he says, "the Lord will circumcise your heart so that you can truly shuv and love Him with all your heart."

Jon: So the shuv will stick.

Tim: The shuv will finally stick. This is important for the exile theme because Ezra, Nehemiah they all come back, they celebrate the Torah, they rebuild the city, "We're going to do it this time." And the whole message of Ezra, Nehemiah is, "Nope." There are all these stories near the end of Nehemiah that just show all this covenant violation of the very Torah stipulations that they just said that they would agree to.

So this is an exile theme. We're back in the land, but this circumcision of the heart has not taken place yet. It's still a future hope. So you can be back in the land but still be an exile because our hearts haven't been transformed.

It's another way of being exiles in time, where what we're waiting for is the new covenant spirit, transformation of the heart. The circumcision of the heart by the

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power of the Spirit, which is what Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Moses were all hoping for. The repentance theme is key to this in this biblical storyline.

Jon: And so with the Holy Spirit and kind of that new covenant, now is the storyline that you can truly shuv and...so I'm an exile of time and I need to turn towards God and love Him with all my heart, soul, and mind, which is loving my neighbor as I love myself.

Tim: That biblical story has been showing humans just of their own willpower don't seem to be able to accomplish that full transformation. What they need is the very life breath of God to began recreating them, which is what the prophets hope for, and which is what the apostles claimed happened at the birth of the New Covenant family at Pentecost.

This is Paul and Peter's whole theology of the Spirit is what the Spirit of Jesus is up to now is the down payment. It's the recreation of the human person.

Jon: To keep you from spinning in circles.

Tim: Yeah, so that your shuving can finally stick. However, we can read that and be like, "All right, the story is moving forward. Now I can finally shuv." But the trajectory of my own moral progress as a follower of Jesus is very similar to the Israelites in the wilderness. We've talked about this before. Keep in step with the Spirit. You can shut down the spirit influence and you have to keep in step with it or else you'll be no different than the Israelites in the wilderness. The storylines from the Hebrew Bible fully set the categories that the apostles talk about.

Jon: It's cool.

Tim: Yeah, it is. Exile and repentance is a big interconnected theme.

Jon: Thanks, Jonathyn.

Tim: Good question, Jonathyn.

Jon: That's awesome. Yeah. All right. Let's do another. Mike Quint from Greenville, South Carolina.

Mike: Hey, Tim, and Jon. My name is Mike Quint, and I'm from Greenville, South Carolina. I have two questions. First, could you talk about how the ideas of exile and return form a foundation for understanding the ideas of death and resurrection, specifically in Ezekiel's vision in the valley of dry bones?

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Second, the Israelites are told to seek the peace, shalom of the city during one of the least peaceful contexts, namely exile. Could you talk about how the coexistence of peace and exile affects the way that we should understand these individual concepts? Thanks.

Tim: Great questions, Mike. I think the first question I can respond to it pretty quickly. We talked about this when we talked about Ezekiel, but it's good for me to repeat it and be more clear, and concise.

The exile, it becomes analogous to and it's related to the concept of death from the Garden of Eden story. So being driven out of the garden is being driven out of the presence of eternal life. Being driven into exile is equated with the loss of eternal life and the loss of the tree of life, and therefore, in the land of death. We've lost the opportunity to transcend mortality.

Right there in the garden story, exile is a form of death. It's a death sentence. That connection between exile as an experience of death is the same thing in Genesis 4 with Cain. God drives him away from the land, and his first question is, "Oh, my gosh, I'm going to die. Somebody's is going to kill me."

Jon: Somebody is going to slaughter me.

Tim: Totally. Again, the connection, exile is a form of death. Then that's just what keeps happening when the family of Abraham goes out of the land. The end of the book of Genesis, they go into exile in Egypt and the new king arises, slavery, and death.

This repetition of exile and death is so foundational that when Ezekiel has a dream about the return from exile, he has a dream about death being transcended, about dead humans being recreated into new life. That's just the biblical paradigm. Exile is a vivid experience of a kind of death, literally and metaphorically, or it's meant to go back and forth, I think, between the two concepts. A physical death is a kind of exile. It's a separation from our home.

Jon: Sure.

Tim: You have to say goodbye. You're leaving the place and the people that you love when you die. It's an exile from my current existence.

Jon: I guess we don't think about it that way. Generally, I think about it as going Home.

Tim: That's interesting.

Jon: Isn't that the typical funeral kind of framework is being in a better place?

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Tim: That's good point.

Jon: But you're saying that if this is our home, then death is a tragic exile?

Tim: Yeah, I've never quite thought about it in that way. Because Paul definitely has a sense...He talks about being at home with the Lord. Like he's in prison in Philippians or in Corinthians. He talks or Corinthians. He talks about when his life was in danger, "It's okay, I'm going to be at home with the Lord." But again, that's not the end of the story. The end of the story is being back in a fully transformed the world as a physical human. And so that's my true home.

In that sense, death is a form of exile and exile is a form of death. That's why Ezekiel's vision of the return from exile is about the recreation of humans into eternal life.

Jon: Cool. And then the second part was seeking the shalom during one of the least peaceful context.

Tim: This is the conversation about Jeremiah 29. Seeking the shalom of Babylon.

Jon: Can you talk about the coexistence of peace and exile and how it affects the way in which we understand these individual concepts?

Tim: Maybe if shalom is an experience of wholeness, harmony, completeness, how do you create an experience that when you're in an environment that by definition is broken and separation and pain of exile. That's a good question.

Jon: That's a good question. I love the Parable of the Yeast and the Dough, Jesus parable, which is "the kingdom of God is like yeast. That you work into the dough, and then the whole thing rises." Yeast is like a bacteria. It's an infection of sorts that will then somehow take over the whole thing.

I love that image because you could be surrounded by chaos, and you inject just a little bit of whatever that shalom is and then it will spread somehow. I don't know practically what that looks like in your own Babylon, but I think it's a really cool image.

Tim: In a different context, the similar paradigm of what Jeremiah is advocating is just you create little symbols in homes that symbolize Eden in the midst of Babylon. Like they're under no illusions that we're actually now living in the Garden of Eden just because I made a garden in my front yard. The point is it's a symbolic statement of your conviction about the future destiny of your people in the world.

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In a way similar, what came to mind, actually as I was listening to Mike's question was that place in 2 Corinthians where Paul is talking about how this message of the good news about King Jesus and the hope of new creation, he talks about how we have this message of glory but we carry it in these cracked jars of clay. That's where the band Jars of Clay got their name. So it's this contrast.

Then he leads into that whole passage where he says, "Life's really hard as an apostle. You're on the road planting churches. We're struck down but never abandoned. We're grieving but never crushed."

He has all these contrasts of like life here in the world is very difficult, but because of just this hope that you have, it transforms that into something that can't crush you. I think that's similar. Even though the shalom that I can help participate in creating or experiencing isn't universal, that doesn't mean it's not real. Usually, it's going to be a back and forth or simultaneously experiencing shalom and exile in the same experiences. It's a lot like parenting.

Jon: How's that?

Tim: Well, the highest high, the most rich experience of love and connection I can have with my little boys is often simultaneous with these really difficult emotional conflicts that erupt over Legos or something. In the same 60 seconds. my little son, August is hanging on me as we make his little car and then I put a Lego brick in the wrong place, he's like, "Dad, no. That's not where it belongs." I'm just like, "Dude, you're way overreacting." It's the same. In the same moment, it's this wonderful, rich connection with my son that goes bad instantly. And it's just like, that's life. Isn't it? Exile and shalom, usually as a package deal.

Jon: We'll always experience the messiness of exile while seeking shalom.

Tim: Oh, yeah. You brought up that metaphor in the conversation about the dirt becoming the material out of which new plants are made.

Jon: Did I?

Tim: You did. You're just talking about how in the biblical story the mess of Israel's exile becomes the material out of which God raises up the wisdom warrior.

Jon: Oh, right.

Tim: So even in exile, He can transform that into something redemptive in the lives of Daniel or—

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Jon: That's probably where this whole idea of "no matter what God can make something good out of it" kind of comes from.

Tim: Yeah, yeah. The catastrophe of the exile provided the ingredients for the story of Daniel to be and do. He's the pivotal figure of the family's David. He's from the Royal seed of David who becomes a witness to God's kingdom and the court to Babylon. It's just an amazing...He wouldn't be there if exile hadn't happened.

Jon: So the same can be very true of our own experience. If you're seeking shalom in your neighborhood, and you experience it not working and you're just actually experiencing death and frustration, it could be that God is going to use that to actually bring shalom in a way that was unexpected.

Tim: Yeah. I think the biblical story is trying to train us to see failure as just part of God's purpose and weaving together some greater story that I don't know end of yet.

Jon: Cool. All right. This is the last question we'll get to. It's from Wade Glass from Alabama.

Tim: Huntsville, Alabama.

Wade: Hey, guys. Thanks for a great podcast. We actually have a group of people going through the book of Daniel right now, and I noticed that even Nebuchadnezzar went through a time of exile in his life in which he came out of it, praising God. I had a question about exile and sanctification, namely is there any time in the Bible where an exile did not result in someone coming out and praising God for who He is? Thanks a lot.

Jon: Cool. Thanks, Wade.

Tim: It's so perceptive question. You're noticing a lot right there that in Daniel Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar has this dream about a great tree that rules the world, so to speak, and he is that tree. Then he lets it go to his head and he thinks that he's God. "Ah, Babylon that I have built with my hands," he says.

Jon: And he's pretty impressive feat.

Tim: Totally.

Jon: He's an impressive human.

Tim: I will never build a large empire.

Jon: An Empire that rules the known world?

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Tim: Yeah. I can't ever put that on my record. He paid.

Jon: You're still young, Tim. You never know.

Tim: But then Daniel confronts them. The meaning of the dream is that if you don't humble yourself under God's kingdom, then you'll be driven into exile. That whole story of Nebuchadnezzar's exile is keyed into the storyline of the Eden story.

So instead of ruling over the beasts, he becomes one of the beasts, and he is driven away from his little Eden that he's made for himself into the wildland. It's all the same vocabulary of Adam and Eve's exile from—

Jon: His exile.

Tim: Yeah. You're right now because there's exile is totally keyed into this exile theme all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Actually, Nebuchadnezzar is a much later example of a pattern that's been going all the way forward. Because remember, Cain is exiled in the next chapter of Genesis, after Adam and Eve's exile.

Then you have all humanity going east into Babylon to build the tower, which is meant to be viewed as a culmination of this exile theme. Abraham undergoes his own exile when he goes down to Egypt. And because of his lack of faith, the family of Abraham goes down.

Jacob, because of his own sin against his brother, he has to flee into exile because of his treachery. And so he ends up in exile for 20 years. Actually, the motif of exile that begins with Adam and Eve actually plays itself out with so many biblical characters.

Sometimes, it's not always that comes out of Babylon, though. It can be to Egypt or for Jacob, he's driven away into the land of Aram and taken advantage of by his uncle. The whole family of Abraham exile down in Egypt. There's a motif. The biblical authors are really interested in this motif of people stupid decisions banishing them from the good situation of their lives into difficult circumstances.

The variety of those stories is really interesting. Because like Jacob, for example, does he come back fundamentally changed from his exile? It actually doesn't seem that way. He's still bartering and trying to create his own blessing on the other side of his exile. So the variety of portraits of people's exiles and how it changes or doesn't change them is a really rich part of the biblical story, I think.

So you asked, is there anybody who goes through exile and doesn't come out really transformed on the other side? I think Jacob is an example.

Jon: He doesn't.

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Tim: It actually seems what truly humbled him was not his own exile, but rather the exile of his beloved son Joseph. It's an interesting inversion. Where his own exile doesn't seem to really rock him, but once his beloved son is exiled, that brings him to his knees. Jacob would be an example of somebody who's exile doesn't fully transform them.

Jon: Do you think the parable of the prodigal son is a type of self-imposed exile?

Tim: Totally. Oh, dude, that whole parable is about the stupid son whose decisions land him in a faraway land becoming a slave to the Gentiles with pigs. He's feeding pigs. Totally exiled.

Jon: Interesting.

Tim: And the father, welcome to come back and bring them into the family.

Jon: Well, the exile.

Tim: There it was.

Jon: There it was. We'll have two videos coming out. I don't know exactly when, but sometime this year. It's a great theme.

Tim: So rich.

Jon: So we'll continue to see it popping up in conversations, I'm sure.

Tim: Yeah, yeah, totally. Thank you.

Jon: Thank you for your question. We couldn't get to all of them. So thank you. Even if we didn't get to them, thank you for sending them. We really appreciate it, and we'll do it again.

Tim: Deal. See you next time.

Jeany: Hello. My name is Jeany Seat De-godoy, and I'm from the Philippines but I live in Okinawa, Japan. The Bible Project is so special for me because it really helps me understand the Scripture in the world that when it was written, all that is happening in there it helps me see. I'm a visual learner, so it's easier to kind of see something while reading the Bible.

So as I use the Read Scripture app, it helps me understand the background before I go through the passage of the day. I also teach young people the Old Testament survey, New Testament survey, so the videos help me make the subject more

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interesting because you guys do a great job with the videos. Especially the application part, it's not just knowledge, but they would understand "Oh, this is how I can apply this particular lesson in my daily life."

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