

# H2R P16: Design Patterns E4

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## Chaotic Waters & Baptism

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Tim: Hey there, welcome to The Bible Project podcast. I'm Tim and you were the wonderful person that you are. Welcome to the podcast. Usually, the person who does these introductions to our podcast is Jon. He's my cofounder in The Bible Project, but he's out of town this week, and so you get me instead.

This episode is actually Part 4 of a four-part conversation that Jon and I had in our "How to Read the Bible" series. Specifically, we're focusing on design patterns in biblical narrative. So if you haven't listened to the first three episodes, I really recommend you do so. Most of this conversation won't make a lot of sense without listening to those previous three.

If you've been listening. You've gotten the basic concept that biblical authors have designed stories across the whole Bible in a coordinated way so that they share key vocabulary and themes. And this is the part of how the Bible was written as a unified whole to follow the thread of key arguments and theological themes that are developing from beginning to end.

So for me, personally, this has been a revolutionary set of skills that I have just really been honing and learning more about from a community of scholars and friends that I'm a part of just in the last couple of years. It's really turned the way I read the Bible into surprising new territory that I just never saw coming. The result is that the Bible has become so much more coherent and cohesive and unified from cover to cover.

So what we're going to talk about in this episode is continue our discussion on the design pattern of God providing salvation for his people at sunrise through the waters. We're going to delve into more Old Testament examples: Joshua going through the Jordan, Isaiah's hope and coming up of Messiah, and we're going to talk about how this whole theme of salvation through the waters leads up to the stories of Jesus baptism and the development of baptism in early Christianity. We're going to talk about some other things like neuroscience, and how reading according to design patterns is actually a really natural way to read texts. It's what our brains are doing most of the time.

Anyway, I love these conversations with Jon. They're like one of the highlights of my week when we get to do this. So there you go. I hope this conversation is helpful for you. Let's just dive in and we'll learn together.

Jon: So we're looking at narrative patterning and we are looking at a specific pattern of creation, and separating chaos, and salvation or at least the ability to live and be alive. Is that what salvation means?

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Tim: Genesis 1 gives us this fundamental portrait of God's purposes for the world. It's to overcome chaos by creating order through acts of separating so that space can emerge dry land for humans to flourish, and be awesome. But then, once humans unleash chaos back into the world, what we see now is this replaying of this pattern of separating the waters, but now it's to rescue or let the remnant pass through that will emerge out the other side of the waters to inhabit the new creation that God has to remake with them because they ruined the first one, so to speak. So it's more of that pattern.

It begins with just God's purpose, and then once humans ruin it, then God repeating it becomes an act of rescue.

Jon: Okay, cool. We looked at Genesis 1, Genesis 7 with the flood story, and we looked at Exodus story. Now, we'll look at a couple more.

Tim: Yeah, a couple more. So these will be examples later on in the Old Testament story, where they just for a chapter or a scene just pick up this whole thing: creation, flood, Exodus. And they just will draw from all those stories as if they're one thing. Because they are.

Jon: Yeah, one idea.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. There are usually at fundamental transition moments in the storyline. So after Moses dies, and Israel is going to enter into the promised land, that constitutes a pretty significant transition moment in the story. So after they send spies into the land and that whole thing...Actually, Joshua sends two spies into the land. Oh, this is too good. Remember when Moses sent the spies into the land?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He sent 12 and only 2 were faithful. So this time Joshua sent only two spies.

Jon: "Let's just send the right two."

Tim: Exactly, yeah. Then the first thing they do is going to Jericho and go into the house of a prostitute. And you're like, "Oh, no." But then the prostitute turns out to be this righteous Canaanite woman named Rahab who confesses that God of Israel is the true God, and so she and her family are rescued. This is really cool.

That itself as a design pattern of mapping of the failure of the first spies onto the success of the second set of spies. But at first you think they're going to fail, but then they don't.

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- Jon: That's nice.
- Tim: Exactly. It's the bread and butter.
- Jon: Totally. They're always thinking about.
- Tim: They're always thinking about how to pair and compare later characters with through that. Then we get ready to bring the nation into the promised land. This is Joshua chapter 3. "So Joshua woke up in the morning and set out from Shittim and they, Israel and Joshua, came to the Jordan River, and they stayed the night there before they crossed over." So here's Israel...
- Jon: Spend the night on one side of the river
- Tim: ...at night before a body of water that represents a barrier between them and the promised land. The people are instructed—
- Jon: The yabbâsâh? The promised yabbâsâh?
- Tim: The promised land. Well, it is dry land, but the dry land features a little different. You'll see. So then Joshua gives them all these instructions that the people are to wait right there while the priests are going to go first. And the priests will carry the ark, and that will tell them the way that they cross through the river.
- In the morning, Joshua says to the people, "Everybody makes yourselves holy..." Oh, excuse me, this is not in the morning. This is still the day before. "Make yourselves holy for tomorrow Yahweh will work wonders in your midst." Remember that moment where the people are freaking out right at the foot of the waters and Moses says...
- Jon: "Don't do anything."
- Tim: ..."Don't do anything. Get ready, Yahweh is about to do something." Here it's "work wonders."
- Jon: And it's do something. Is make yourself holy.
- Tim: Yeah, make yourselves holy.
- Jon: Which what? Like ritually pure? What is he talking about?
- Tim: This is the sacred moment. Something unique and holy is about to happen, so you need to make yourself—

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Jon: But what would be the things people would be doing then at this point?

Tim: Actually, this is riffing off of itself. "Make yourselves holy" is riffing off of what the Israelites were to do - what Moses said to Israel the day before Yahweh showed up on Mount Sinai. They are to make themselves holy.

Jon: So it's connecting to that story?

Tim: Yeah, ritual purity. "Then Yahweh said to Joshua, 'Today, I will begin to make you great in the eyes of all Israel so that they will know just as I was with Moses so I will be with you'" So we have parallel scenes, settings...actually think through our plot character setting. Parallel settings: The Israel at the foot of the waters needing the cross. Parallel characters: Joshua is explicitly painted as a new Moses. And parallel plot conflicts: that people need to cross through the waters to get to the place that God has promised.

"The priest walk towards the water," Verse 16, "and the waters of the Jordan were cut off where they float up above and they stood in a single heap pile." So it's not through a sea because there you need to spread the waters where you have two walls. But now it's a river. But it's the same thing happening, it's just the wall is happening upstream. So it stands in not two walls, but a single heap.

"And the people crossed across from Jericho the priesthood carrying the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh on dry ground." So they are standing there in the midst of the Jordan while all Israel was crossing on dry ground until the nation finished, then the priests follow them through. Then the story moves on.

So is this a salvation moment? Well, they're not in danger but it's the salvation template playing itself out. God bringing the people finally out of the wilderness into the land that He's promised. They're crossing through the waters to the place that God's prepared for them. Genesis 1.

Jon: The different element here is the priests as kind of an agent.

Tim: The priests go before them. Yes, that's right. Totally. You have priestly representatives go in first and then what is true of them, the remnant passing through the waters becomes two as the rest who follow. I've never quite put it that way, but that's exactly what's happening. The priestly representative go in first.

Jon: And there's no rock in this story.

Tim: Yeah.

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- Jon: Interesting.
- Tim: The waters are cut off upstream.
- Jon: Cool.
- Tim: So that's a good example of this is brief. The other ones were big and elaborate. This one's just below flash in one way of —
- Jon: And it's easy to get to this and be like, "It sounds like they're just not being creative and they're doing another Red Sea moment."
- Tim: Does this feel like the Star Wars example to you? Remember when we looked at "The Force Awakens," how it was replaying all those scenes?
- Jon: Yeah, it does. Totally. This would be a lot easier to visualize in the video then, the taking and seizing.
- Tim: Actually, that's interesting. Here, let me show you something. In my prophets and gospels class, we were talking about all this stuff as we were walking through the birth narratives of Jesus in Matthew. Because that's all the birth narratives were doing is doing this.
- Jon: It's rehashing all these themes.
- Tim: Yeah. All these little moments in the story of Jesus become replays of earlier stories. This was looking at different example in the Gospel of Luke, where the song that Mary sings is itself just massively sophisticated copy and paste poem from earlier biblical—
- Jon: It's a mash-up. It's a remix.
- Tim: It's a remix. Totally. So there was this study done on the poems composed by the Qumran crew that composed the Dead Sea Scrolls because they have a lot of their own poetry. And it's just like that.
- Jon: Oh, okay. It's just more that stuff.
- Tim: Yes, more that stuff. So they did a comparative reading of the poetry of the Qumran community with the poetry—
- Jon: With the Gospels?

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Tim: ...in the Gospels. It's really interesting. So they were commenting on this usage of traditional scriptural language in a new context is not a sign of a lack of originality. Rather, it's the testimony to the art of a poet who can take language already laden with meaning for people familiar with the heritage of their scriptures, and use it to describe new situation. I thought that was on point the way of describing what's going on here.

Jon: In a way, it's becoming a new type of language.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: Because?

Tim: The earlier narratives give you the vocabulary to talk about salvation. This is how we talk about salvation.

Jon: Right. It's so interesting to think about just language in general. Like, we take an idea, an abstraction, put a word on it, and then now, instead of having to discuss this abstraction at length, we just use the code word.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: So whatever it is, God, I guess it makes sense.

Tim: Yeah, sure.

Jon: Although God's more than abstraction.

Tim: Totally.

Jon: But then if you're trying to create new paradigms, typically, you create new vocabulary.

Tim: Oh, yeah, that's right. This is what philosophers do.

Jon: Yeah, all the time is [create?] new words.

Tim: They coin new words to try and create new paradigms and structures of thought that they hope will get picked up by people after them.

Jon: But it seems like what's happening here isn't coining new words. It's coining narrative types. Like, if you want to understand what it means that humans bring chaos to creation or the temptation of humans who bring chaos, whatever these things are, I'm not going to give you a word for it, but I'm going to give you a story

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for it. And the story becomes the shorthand. But then what's beautiful about that is then the story can get reused and reshaped over and over and over in a way that a vocab word can't.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: It's very inhabitable. It's very much like—

Tim: And you can apply it in just lots of new and different settings.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I just read this really interesting article about the way the different presidents since Martin Luther King Jr., each president's speechwriters have used and employed key themes from Martin Luther King Jr. speeches.

Jon: Oh. They're remixing his speech.

Tim: They are remixing. And what they're often usually remixing is Dr. King's remixing of biblical imagery. So you have images about the Exodus or passages from the prophets that Dr. King was adapting. Then he'll go through and whatever, you know, show how Barrack Obama, for example, at key speeches would adapt King's adaptation of something from the Exodus. So Exodus is the fundamental thing, but it's part of now a living tradition of that story creating a—

Jon: I think this is what people mean when they say that this book shapes the way we think.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: It's like giving us the actual categories to think by.

Tim: At the end of the day, that's what our brains are doing from our first moments of existing. When, the bright light, or that shape that comes into my horizon with moving features, that shape appears most of every day. And that shape is a little different than the other shape, but they both you know...And then you're comparing shapes. You're making comparisons.

Then as you get older, you come into contact with lots of shapes, then you realize that you need your own vocabulary for them. They are faces. They are people. All our brains are doing is just layering upon layering of analogies with pre-existing things and experiences they have had.



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So this is a form of that in narrative - creating these comparative analogies from the earlier stories to the later stories so that I interpret my life by means of these narratives.

Jon: Have you heard of the book "Metaphors We Live By"? It's George Lakoff.

Tim: Lakoff. I'm familiar with another one of his works.

Jon: Oh, yeah, the one we talked about before about morality?

Tim: Yes. He wrote one called "More Than Cool Reason." It might be an earlier version of "Metaphors We Live By" But it's similar. That's an argument about metaphor, but it's a form of comparison right now.

Jon: It's a form of comparison.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: That's all metaphor is. It's just how we think. This is how fundamentally our brains think in metaphor. All the way down, it's just there's metaphor layered on metaphor layer metaphor.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: Comparing and patterning our experiences so that we can make sense of them.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. I still remember when watching my kids encounter dogs when they were infants. [inaudible 00:17:14]. We didn't have a dog, and not many of our friends did. But we had a few that did. And I remember the first time they encounter dogs. And it's just watching a tiny human encounter something they have no categories for.

Jon: Just to figure it out.

Tim: It's like it's shorter than these other creatures that are around me all the time, but then over repeated experiences, they build up this reservoir of patterns that they can draw on the memories and be like, "Some of these creatures are friendly. Some of them are not friendly, like that one." There you go.

When you put it in those terms, what you see the biblical authors doing is such a basic...I think that's why it's so memorable. When you see the narratives that are designed this way, you can't really unseat it because it's just so basic to how you see the world.

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[00:18:46]

Tim: Here's another brief example in the prophets. In this case, this becomes a part of Isaiah's way of talking about future hope. This is cool. So for Joshua, it was narrating past event showing how it was another moment of the redemption through the waters parting. Here, it's Isaiah Chapter 11.

He begins by talking about when the Kings from the line of David are cut down, and Assyria and Babylon have come and we're in exile. What are we hoping for? And he describes the line of David like a stump. So this is the famous shoot. It's a little green branch that shoots out of the stump is the new king from David's line. He's endowed by the Spirit; he's going to bring justice to the poor.

The pattern for what we're talking about picks up in verse 10, where it says, "It will come about on that day the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; and the nations will seek him out, and his resting place will be glory." So you have this image of the Messiah, future king who stands like a big tall flagpole and all the nations are coming.

Jon: It's a big shoot.

Tim: Yeah. It's actually funny. It's a root of Jesse, which is underground.

Jon: It's a root within the stump?

Tim: It's a root of the stump, but it's standing out like flagpole. It's kind of mixing metaphors.

Jon: Got it.

Tim: And all the nations are coming. So if Israel has been exiled because of their covenant rebellion, and they're out there, and all the nations are coming, then if we're going to get the family of Abraham back together, we got to reclaim all the scattered Israelites for the nations coming. That's the next poem. "It will come about on that day the Lord will again use his arm a second time to purchase the remnant of his people that remains." Let's just pause right there.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: God is using his arm a second time.

Jon: Now, is this a second time in Isaiah or is this referring to Moses being the first time?

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Tim: It's really interesting. The fundamental image of God's arm and Moses stretching out his arm, it's Exodus icons here. There's a little Exodus icon. So the second time—

Jon: So is he just riffing on Exodus?

Tim: Yeah. It's the new Exodus. And what is the new Exodus going to do? It's going to purchase a remnant, one who remains, which is the key image of Noah floating out there among the chaos waters and that God remembers him and so on.

Where are the remnant? What are the waters in which the remnant is floating when God...? If we kind of map the Noah story onto the Exodus story, you have people in the waters going through them or people floating on the waters. Well, they are the remnant that sitting out therein, Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Babylon, the islands of the sea.

Jon: So all these other nations are the seas?

Tim: Are like the waters. "And He will lift up a banner to the nation's." Oh, I know what the banner is.

Jon: King.

Tim: King from the line of David. "And gather the scattered ones of Israel and regathered the dispersed ones of Judah." So the Lord uses his arm - to do what? To lift a banner. What's the banner? There's all metaphors. You cannot draw this on a page. We could try.

Jon: We could try.

Tim: And be like drawing the Song of Songs.

Jon: Right. It's weird.

Tim: So you have the Lord using his arm just like in Exodus but he's lifting up the king, and the nation's come and the remnant comes from among the nations like the Israelites passing through the waters. "And there will be a highway for the remainder or the remnant of his people who remain from Assyria just like there was for Israel on the day that they came up from the land of Egypt.

Jon: When they came out of Egypt, no one was remaining that was referring to the—

Tim: Yeah, no Egyptians remained.

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Jon: No Egyptians remained. But this remnant, this remainder is of the ones coming back - the new Exodus.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And so he's very explicitly...it's like, if you haven't caught on by now, I'm talking about just like became a part of Egypt.

Tim: So it was very explicit that this is a new Exodus, but the rescue of the remnant is a Noah image. And both stories are about passing through the dangerous waters. In the Noah story, it's the chaos waters in Genesis 1 that we're pushed back. In the Exodus story, it's the waters of the sea but also what's in the waters that's chasing them, it's the nations.

Jon: The nations are in the waters chasing them?

Tim: Well, Egypt is in...Remember the Israelites were passing...

Jon: They are through and now they're in it.

Tim: ...and then the Egyptian. So there are two threats for the Israelite in Exodus story. The walls of the water could collapse, and the Egyptians could get them. Now, here in Isaiah, he's merged those metaphorically into the same threat.

Jon: That being in the nation's is being in the chaos waters.

Tim: Yes. They are so creative. This poem, these weird metaphors, you all of a sudden realize this poem is a meditation on Genesis 1, the flood narrative and the Exodus narrative altogether.

Jon: And in a way, I guess it makes sense. Like, if I were to have to imagine what God's new act of rescuing his people would look like, I would use the categories of thing, well, what's happened before.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, that's right. That's what makes this a good example is it's Isaiah reflecting on future hope. But the language that he has to talk about future hope is the language given him by the narratives about salvation at sunrise through the waters.

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Tim: These are just four examples. We've only looked at four. Creation, flood, Exodus - No, five - Joshua and now this one. There's way more, but those are five really good

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one. So let's just watch how the apostles totally are in tune with all this in the New Testament. The story of Jesus's baptism, for example.

Jon: That's another one with loaded stories. There's so much happening.

Tim: Yeah, totally. We keep talking about it as the months go by and then it keeps coming up. You read it and you tell me what you see emerging.

Jon: All right, Professor Jon. Mark 1:9: "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." Well, I don't think I would notice any of this stuff, but now that I'm trying to notice—

Tim: Right.

Jon: Well, we got the Spirit so we got the ruach descending upon him, like Genesis 1, descending on the chaotic waters.

Tim: But also remember the flood narrative in the Exodus.

Jon: The strong east wind...

Tim: And the Exodus narrative that's where you go off in the waters.

[crosstalk 00:27:12]

Jon: Oh, it's the strongest wind in the Exodus narrative, and then in the flood narrative, it's just a wind.

Tim: It is wind pushing back the waters.

Jon: So here comes the ruach, the of the Spirit the wind. Jesus is in waters.

Tim: He's in waters.

Jon: He's coming out on the water.

Tim: Yeah. And what particular waters?

Jon: In the Jordan.

Tim: The Jordan, so that's the Joshua story coming up there.

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- Jon: That's the Joshua story. "And the heavens open," is that splitting?
- Tim: Oh, man. Whoa. Hold on one second. Mark 1:9.
- Jon: It's kind of a son of mankind of thing happening too, right?
- Tim: Yeah, dude. It's the heavens were ripped.
- Jon: Heavens were ripped.
- Tim: The heavens ripped open. This is first of all an echo to a poem in Isaiah 64 where the poet says, "Oh, that you would rip open the heavens and come down and rescue us from exile." But the idea of ripping or splitting open, connected to waters is all the way back to...
- Jon: Floods story.
- Tim: ...the flood story and the Exodus.
- Jon: Ripping open, yeah.
- Tim: Do you start to see, that's how usually when there's an echo to an earlier story, it's not just one, it's to the whole matrix?
- Jon: Yeah. It's the library of stories.
- Tim: It's the library of this particular pattern. And so you can use the language from maybe one of the patterns, but you're usually bouncing off all of them. Well, yeah, that's good.
- Jon: "And then the Spirit is like a dove," the dove plays a role. Is it a dove in the flood story?
- Tim: It's just a bird. The hovering is of wings flapping. The Spirit hovering over the waters.
- Jon: But is it a dove in the flood stories?
- Tim: Yeah, yeah. Noah sends out a dove over the waters.
- Jon: He sends out a dove. There's a spirit like a dove.
- Tim: Yes.

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Jon: The voice comes out of heaven, "You're my son." Oh, yeah. And the son, my firstborn son.

Tim: I think a voice goes out over the water.

Jon: Yeah, Genesis 1, the voice...

Tim: That's right.

Jon: And then that's where Moses was instructed to say that Israel was this firstborn son.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. "Israel's my firstborn son. Let them go free." Which happens as they go through the waters. Then right after this story is Jesus going into the wilderness for 40 days and nights.

Jon: Which maps onto Israel's wandering through the wilderness for 40 years.

Tim: So it's all unstated. It's all—

Jon: Mark doesn't say like, "Just like Moses in Israel, or just like God created the earth." He just uses the vocabulary.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. So you could either say, we're making this up.

Jon: In some ways it kind of feels like we are, but then in another sense you kind of like, "Well, this is kind of in a way obvious." Once you see it, it's like, if he didn't mean to do that, he got really lucky.

Tim: I've been thinking about this. In classroom settings of taking students through this, there's an element to it where I think its participation. We become participants in discovering new depths of meaning here. Like, somebody asked when we with the San Jose and doing the live podcast, "What are the controls here?"

Jon: How do you not get too crazy?

Tim: I've really been thinking a lot about that because I've had other students ask the question. There's a part of me that like, "Yeah."

Jon: It's a very Protestant question.

Tim: Totally. Exactly. That's what I've been thinking about is there's a sense in which this literature isn't trying to close down avenues of meaning.

Jon: No, it's not. It's like, "What else do you see here? What else can you find?"

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Tim: Yeah. And the way that the same vocabulary words "split open" can apply to the waters from below to the waters in the sea, to the skies above, it's creative. It's trying to spark your imagination and to get you to reflect and think about how God saves the world.

Jon: Now, there will be a point where someone brings something up and they're like, "Look at how this is connected. This guy ate this thing and that's the same word as the thing over here." So at some point, kind of have to go, "Actually..."

Tim: "I'm not so sure."

Jon: It kind of feels like you're adding something that the biblical authors were not tuned into at all.

Tim: Correct. That's right.

Jon: So the control is, then, does the community of readers kind of checking each other?

Tim: I think so. I think there are some...does it fit within the pattern? In other words, can I see this pattern substantiated across many stories? The same words keep coming up. Then I think it's ranking them in terms of probability. Like, well, this one's possible, this one is super likely. The waters of the Jordan.

Jon: I think were in the realm.

Tim: We're pretty clear these guys are not stupid. They could have picked many streams or rivers, but they picked that one.

[00:32:58]

Tim: So that's baptism story. We can walk into the writings of Paul. There are just a few places where Paul talks about the waters. There's one in 1 Corinthians Chapter 10 where he opens and he says, "I don't want you, Corinthians to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud and passed through the sea. And all were baptized into Moses in the cloud, and in the sea." That's just a short little thing.

From there he goes on to then tell stories about the wilderness; people dying in the wilderness. So this is a whole rabbit hole. I just want to make one connection here. First of all, Paul is writing to a group of Greek and Roman sitting in Corinth, and he cites the stories of the Israelites in Exodus as our ancestors.

Jon: All right. You can kind of loose with that.



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Tim: No. He has a deep conviction that Gentiles have been grafted—

Jon: I was going to say loose with genetics.

Tim: Oh, loose with genetics. That's right.

Jon: That's what I was going to say.

Tim: Serious theology loose with genetics.

Jon: Serious theology loose with genetics.

Tim: That all of a sudden these people are grafted into the family of Abraham, which means the family salvation story becomes their story. And so he connects their own baptism. He uses the word baptism, which is from the Christian ritual, but he maps on going into the waters, the baptism with the Israelites passing through the Red Sea for the lead scene - the waters.

It's a little side point that he makes. So what is assumed there is a whole way of thinking about baptism, and connected to this pattern of salvation through the waters.

Jon: It seems like there's really rich paradigm of being baptized. It's not just the way in my tradition it's, you're dying and coming back to life. But also what Paul seems to be thinking about is being rescued from chaos and being rescued from oppression and danger and all these things.

Tim: Slavery, all that. Yeah, totally. So it's all these narratives.

Jon: Baptism has a pretty deep set of meaning.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. It's echoing all these stories. So there are a few other places in the New Testament where baptism is connected into this whole chain of stories. Well, obviously Jesus's baptism that we just saw, now here's baptism of Jesus's followers.

Romans Chapter 6 is like ground zero for Paul's theology of baptism. He just brings it up and really explores it in depth. He uses this example here. It's opening of Romans 6. "What should we say then? Should we go on sinning knowing that God's grace will increase?"

Jon: Sure.

Tim: No way.

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Jon: I mean, no way.

Tim: "We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Now Pause, you go back to Romans 5.

Jon: I mean, if this is a serious question, I could tell them a couple ways you can live in sin.

Tim: That's right. In Romans 5 and 6, the fundamental metaphor is humans are slaves to sin. He uses the Exodus narrative here. He says, "Pharaoh becomes sin and death."

Jon: The slave master.

Tim: And we're like the enslaved Israelites, and Jesus accomplishes the new Exodus. Look at what he says next. "Don't you know that all of us who are baptized into the Messiah Jesus were baptized into his death. We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death, in order just as the Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father so we too may live a new life." There are so many layers like an onion.

Now, Paul has added a new narrative repetition to the whole matrix of salvation through the waters. So you've got the story of Jesus being baptized. The words of the Father to the Son there were, "This is my son, whom I love; with whom I'm pleased." Those are all echoes of Old Testament texts about the Messianic King.

There's only one other beloved son in the Bible, Isaac. He's called the beloved son in the story where Abraham hands the son over to death and the son is redeemed from death. And then, "In whom I'm well pleased," is from the suffering servant poems in Isaiah.

So Jesus's baptism is already telling you the identity of Jesus. He's being baptized to go through the waters on Israel's behalf to die. Then the gospel narrative plays that out. So Paul condenses all of that with "just as Jesus was baptized into death.' So when you are baptized—

Jon: He was subsumed by chaos.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Submerged under death in chaos and then raised out of death in chaos.

Jon: Now, we didn't look at any resurrection narratives but do they use the words of like splitting or separating?

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Tim: Off the top my head, I've only got a couple of little things clicking. But I just was trying to focus here on the waters.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Noah, safe through the waters. Israel, safe through the waters. Jesus going into the waters in this baptism that marks him on a road towards his redemptive death. And now Paul is putting followers of Jesus going into the water being identified with Jesus's death. Coming out of the waters, like the Israelites or Noah passed through, o Jesus is raised out of death, and so you two are raised out of death too. Meaning you're no longer living in Egypt is his argument. You're no longer a slave to sin is what is going to go on to say.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: You're the Israelite, you were then freed from slavery, why would you go back to Egypt?

Jon: The Israelites probably didn't really think of going through the Red Sea as coming through death.

Tim: No, no. I think that the later—

Jon: But now it's kind of...

Tim: Reflection.

Jon: ...later reflection. Cool.

Tim: And just in case you're wondering if we're making all this up, in 1 Peter 3 just says it point blank. 1 Peter Chapter 3 He talks about "The patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, excuse me, eight people, were brought safely through the water." Now, that's an odd way of putting it. Because in the flood narrative—

Jon: They are on the water.

Tim: Right. They're in the boat floating on the water. So you can tell he's got the Noah story and the Exodus story merged together here and he's thinking—

Jon: Noah, was not in a summary.

Tim: Totally.

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Jon: You know what I was thinking though?

Tim: Go ahead.

Jon: Jonah and the big fish, it's kind of a submarine.

Tim: He goes through the waters.

Jon: He goes through the waters in the fish submarine.

Tim: He totally does. I'm certain that's a part of what's going on there. He was hoping he would die in the waters. That's his purpose. And God takes them through the water. Yeah, totally, there's something going on there.

Jon: Much different vessels.

Tim: So he's merged the flood in the Exodus stories, and then he says, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you," namely it brings you through the water. And then he immediately clarifies, "Listen, I'm not talking about going into the water and the dirt comes off your flesh. What I'm talking about is your appeal to God through a good conscience, for a good conscience."

In other words, if you allow yourself to go into the waters, you are participating willingly in the story of your helplessness, that I am a participant in the chaos, I'm going into the waters trusting that God will bring me out alive through the other side as a new kind of human or to fulfill His purpose for creation. And that's what he says "Baptism saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." That's what he says. This is just a little side comment for Peter. Then he moves on.

Jon: He's like, "Oh, these were side comments."

Tim: Yes. Which tells you that there's a whole teaching of the apostles that just didn't survive in the New Testament where they've worked this out in details.

Jon: It really bothers me in detail.

Tim: And what we get is the little back later references to this earlier body...it's biblical theology.

Jon: So at the end of the last conversation on this last episode, I said, "I wish it was more clear." It's clear in the sense of, okay, I see how this is working. This makes sense. When it comes to this idea of having a good conscience and being rescued from the slavery to sin, it becomes really rich and beautiful connecting that to the idea of

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slavery in Egypt and crossing through the waters, and baptism, and Jesus dying and being subsumed by chaos and coming out.

Tim: Going like the priests ahead of us into the water...

Jon: Yeah, like the priest. Yeah, that's right. Holding it back.

Tim: ...so that we can pass through alongside them.

Jon: I love it. But the part of me that's very modern, enlightened part of me is going, "But what am I supposed to do? What does it mean? How am I supposed to apply this to my life?" This is all very metaphoric and poetic. And sure, I can go to through the act of baptism, but then what? So why am I wrestling with that? Why does that seem...?

Tim: I mean, it might just be a temperament or nature and nurture. It's the way that you exist in the world, you're looking for kind of clarity about things that aren't given to that kind of clarity.

Jon: It's like if we were talking to someone who wants to start following Jesus, and they're dealing with all of this, their life is falling apart. There's all this chaos and it's happening because of other people's violence and corruption and it's also happening because of their own stupidity at times.

And they're captured by the upside down nature of Jesus kingdom and wanting to be a part of that and they're like, "How do I know I'm part of this? What does it mean?" And you start telling them stories of Israelites coming out of slavery, and that's the same thing as you're coming out of slavery. It's all very beautiful and it's all very meaningful. But then it really then makes the person that have to connect that to be, "Well, what does that mean for my life? What's the slavery I'm coming out of? What does it mean now for me to go through the waters today?" Maybe that's the point is just to be always wrestling with those images and thinking about that in terms of your life.

Tim: Well, it gives you a narrative in which you can live. So if I become a follower of Jesus, and I've got this pattern of behavior, it goes back really deep to my childhood and stuff with my dad, and whatever, then, living in this narrative means viewing those destructive patterns of thinking and behaving as a form of slavery. It's pretty intuitive image, especially with I keep repeating them even when I don't want to. Right?

Then we're back to a snake whispering in your ear and these stories give you all the images you need to help you process through what's happening. But also then to say, if I'm going to find freedom, it's going to have to be through someone else

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doing something for me that I can't do for myself, and then grabbing on to them and trust that what's true of them can be true of me. That I can be freed from these failures and these chaotic patterns.

So what do I need to do? I need to put my trust in Jesus. His life is my life and I need to go see a therapist to keep in step with the Spirit. The Spirit of Jesus wants to heal me and bring me in the promised land.

Jon: I need to work with the Spirit.

Tim: Yeah, I need to cooperate and not rebel against the leading of the Spirit but work with the ruach that's pushing back the chaos.

Jon: The same ruach that pushed back chaos in Genesis 1 is pushing back the chaos in your own life.

Tim: Yeah. But like in the Noah story, I can reintroduce chaos into my life by violence and stupidity or I can work with the ruach.

Jon: So interesting this image of the Christian life being piling up ruach like the river heap or whatever. But just piling up chaos and then God's ruach pushing it back.

Tim: Pushing it back.

Jon: And it's just like this constant...and then trying to cooperate with the Spirit instead of cooperating with the piling up.

Tim: What's the main psychology diagnosis handbook? What's that?

Jon: DSM.

Tim: The DSM. What you could do is sit down with somebody and diagnose the things they're working through, right? And you could use that vocabulary.

Jon: Sure.

Tim: That narrative world to identify the problem, here's the solution, and then steps to do. That's one language. But the biblical narratives are also providing us with a language and a story instead of patterns and images. And the whole point is that I see myself as a part of this story.

So we're just kind of playing out what it means to think through an addictive behavior that I formed early in my childhood and that I want freedom from. That's

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one way to describe it. But you can also use the salvation at sunrise through the waters as imagery. And both are. It's not an either or, but it's—

Jon: But the one that the Bible gives is this power from outside of ourselves. A power that has conquered chaos.

Tim: And has Jesus at the center.

Jon: Has Jesus at the center.

Tim: He's the Joshua. Jesus's name is Joshua, so he's the Joshua going through before us, and submerged through.

Jon: Joshua in the Jordan.

Tim: Yeah. This is how the biblical narratives are written. They're designed this way and they are meant to be read in this way. There are very little other resources like this to explore this. There's actually more for the New Testament use of the old than there are for the Old Testament use of the New. There's very little author on a popular level helping people see this. So I'm excited about this video.

Jon: Isn't this kind of what all the theme videos are doing?

Tim: In a way. What they're showing is the fruit.

Jon: The fruit of it?

Tim: The fruit of reading the Bible this way.

Jon: So this is kind of a look under the hood of how we decide on theme videos.

Tim: Yeah, yeah. How you follow repeated themes throughout the Bible. In this case, it's the paying attention to the weave of the biblical narrative themselves.

[00:50:31]

Tim: So which example should be used? Stupid humans tempted and embraced their own destruction or salvation at sunrise through the waters once human focus?

Jon: Both would be great videos.

Tim: One's God's purpose, redemption focused, both are built on a foundation of learning to follow keywords throughout many narratives, and then parallels and plot

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setting and characterization. This can be a capstone to the three preceding narrative videos.

Jon: I think either could work. I feel like the "going through the waters" is going to be a lot easier to show the visual visually how things are patterning.

Tim: I think so too.

Jon: It's much more visual. The other one's just so much more going on.

Tim: It's more sophistic more sophisticated.

Jon: It's more sophistic more sophisticated.

Tim: Things get reversed way more. You have the fruit, becomes Hagar, become—

Jon: Become Saul.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Which is also very interesting. It would be a cool video.

Tim: You could pull it off.

Jon: And you could it pull off.

Tim: The advantage we have going for a visual medium is using composition to make things parallel. Sort of certain things, there's screen left, certain things are center, certain things are yellow. I don't know, whatever. But my hunch is the salvation through the waters is going to work better for us.

Jon: I'm feeling that way too. I got a random question. Not completely random. So we were talking about the flood, so I've been thinking about this. So God says, "The rainbow is like a promise. I'm not going to destroy the world through a flood."

Tim: It's a sign.

Jon: It's a sign of a promise?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Why did you specify?

Tim: Because it's important. It's a sign of the covenant promise that He makes.



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- Jon: I think a lot about the future and I think about there's two different kinds of ways as a Christian to imagine how God is going to deal with creation. The one I think I grew up with which is it's going to all get burned up and recreated, like from scratch, kind of like, "All right, we're done with that. Zap you out, let's start again." Then the other one is fundamentally changed but not destroyed.
- Tim: Born again, to use the apostle John's language.
- Jon: If you were having an argument or a conversation about which one's more biblical, this kind of destruction start fresh or this reforming to make completely different?
- Tim: Or renewal.
- Jon: And renewal? Because Peter I think has where he talks about the earth will be destroyed by fire, right? Something like that.
- Tim: He uses images of fire and things melting. The things that are melting, there's interpretive translation challenge thereof, whether it's the elements, or whether it's the rebellious angelic hosts of heaven, namely the rebellious sons of God being destroyed. But that's some...Either way, he uses fire imagery yeah talk about the purifying of creation.
- Jon: Okay. But could we just like if just in the flood narrative with the sign of the rainbow and God's not...if the flood represents creation collapsing back on itself, that seems to be the paradigm of "Start over, let creation clap back on itself and then I'm going to pull out the remnant and we're going to start fresh." That's kind of like let everything burn, the tents going down, rapture people out.
- Tim: Yeah, that's right.
- Jon: But it seems the sign of the promise in the flood story is "I'm not going to do that."
- Tim: I won't ever do that again. Yes.
- Jon: So is that just the end of discussion, like, that's not going to happen? God isn't going to do that?
- Tim: Yeah, I think that's what that means. Yeah, the whole point. Remember the reason He brings the flood, is the heart of humans is screwed up all the time. Then the moment Noah gets off the boat, God says, "You know what I know about human? He repeats the same thing." He says, "Therefore, I'm never going to do that again." And the logic of the argument seems to be—

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Jon: And if it was just like, "I'm never going to flood the earth again," it's kind of like, "Okay, well, thanks, God but you could burn the earth. You could send a meteorite and destroy the earth, that you could blow up the sun and that's going to screw things up." But it seems like if the point is...

Tim: To put right, I don't screw things up.

Jon: I don't screw things up. The sun is a powerful laser.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: But the flood story is not about how God's going to destroy the earth as much as it's showing you the collapsing of creation.

Tim: Correct. Yeah, that's right.

Jon: And he's saying, "I'm not going to do that again." So is it I'm not going to flood the earth or I'm not going to collapse creation on itself?

Tim: I think it's that. It's that. When Peter brings up that narrative, he says, "Remember by the word of God, the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water by water." So the Word of God water separate from waters, dry land. And through which the world was also destroyed, flooded with water. God allows the water to makeover. But by His word, the present age, the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire kept for the day of justice for the destruction of...I'm not going to finish the sentence. But just what in your imagination—

Jon: Will fire destroy?

Tim: Follow through. So, God annihilates everything's with waters, "I'm not going to do that again, but I'll use fire instead." Then he goes on. "Kept for the or the day of justice for the destruction of..." And you're not looking at the text. So in your imagination, what should be that sentence? How should the sentence finish?

Jon: The destruction of land.

Tim: Yeah, the cosmos or something.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Then what he says, "For the destruction of the wicked." The purifying fire is about the removal of evil, which maps on precisely to the nature of fire imagery in the prophets. God says He's going to burn Jerusalem so that He can remove the wicked

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and restore the repentant remnant into the New Jerusalem which is the purified. The best is Zephaniah Chapter 3 when it's like, "I'm going to assemble all nations and pour out my burning wrath and fire on them." And you're like, "Oh, no more nations. They're done for."

Then the next sentence is "So that they can call upon me with a pure speech." Pure being purified. So even the fire imagery is metaphorical.

Jon: It's not about de-escalating creation into nothingness.

Tim: Then he goes on later on the paragraph and talks about the day of the Lord comes like a thief. The heavens pass away with a roar, and then the something will be destroyed with heat and the land and all of its works will be." And then there's a textual variant.

One is burned up, the other one is discovered, in which case it's another melting down to expose what needs to be removed. Like melting down metal so that's dross comes up. For me, at least I think the most coherent reading is that the fire imagery is metaphorical because the things that are getting burned up isn't creation. It's evil deeds.

Jon: Whether or not the fire is metaphoric, is it getting to that this needs to be destroyed or does it need to be remade new?

Tim: I think depending on the communication goals of an author, the apostles will sometimes really want to emphasize the continuity between...

Jon: This for creation and the next creation.

Tim: ...this creation for this age and the New Age. And so John will talk about "I am making all things new." This has a parallel in the resurrection narratives where Jesus is showing them as hands that have the scars still. And he has a human body and they can recognize him most of the times. So the same Jesus they hung out within Galilee is the same. Point there is about the continuity and that God's not going to give up. He's going to redeem this thing. The redemption from slavery imagery. Creation redeemed from slavery to decay.

But then there are other times, especially when the apostles are focusing on the tragedy and the horror of what humans have done to the place. And when they want to emphasize how that won't be around anymore, God's going to deal with, what you find is that they typically use images are metaphors that emphasize discontinuity. So the world as we experience it will be burned.

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Jon: The sky will fade away.

Tim: Correct. Again, none of this is about video camera footage. It's telling us something about the nature of the world as we know it, and the nature of the world to come. There, it's the evil won't be allowed to pass through The Day of the Lord. It will stop and be removed. And so both are true in this way of talking—

Jon: Yeah, but it's kind of like one paradigm makes you want to kind of just huddle up and wait and another one would make you want to go out and...

Tim: Do something.

Jon: ...do something.

Tim: Sure. Depending on your social location, sometimes disciples of Jesus were in a social setting where they have the ability to do something. Other times, especially in these early decades when all these things were written, and you're persecuted religious minority living in an ancient Empire, you're not going to go protest. So what are you going to do? You huddle and wait and pray. There you go. So both can be true, I think even in different seasons of maybe the same person's life depending on what season they are in.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: You guys, thanks for listening to The Bible Project podcast. I hope it was helpful for you as it was helpful for me. Our show today was produced by Dan Gummel, with music by Dan Koch. This is part of our process of The Bible Project studios where we make short animated films about the books of the Bible and exploring theological themes in the Bible.

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Elisa: My name is Elisa [SP] McClain, and I'm from Corvallis, Oregon. I really like all the animated videos that look like comics because they're funny and they really get the point across. I figure it helps me understand what's going on when we're reading the Bible because we watched the different videos in our youth group. We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. We are crowdfunded project by people like me. Find free videos study notes and more at [thebibleproject.com](http://thebibleproject.com).