

# H2R P22: Poetry Q&R

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## Poetry and Metaphor

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[48:25]

Speakers in the audio file:

Speaker 1: Jon Collins

Speaker 2: Tim Mackie

Speaker 3: Ivan

Speaker 4: Chris Powers

Speaker 5: Jackson

Speaker 6: Tyler

Speaker 7: Kerrie

Speaker 8: Clayton Cullaton

Speaker 9: Maggie

Speaker 10: Speaker

## Metaphor and Poetry

[Start of transcription 00:00:07.0]

Jon Collins: Welcome to The Bible Project podcast. Today, this episode is a question in response on our poetry and metaphor episodes. It was the last five episodes talking through poetry, and metaphor, and symbolism in biblical poetry. We got great questions from you guys and we're going to respond as best we can. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

Jon Collins: Good morning, Tim.

Tim Mackie: Hey, there. Good morning.

Jon Collins: How are you?

Tim Mackie: I'm great. A Cup of coffee?

Jon Collins: Yeah, with Deborah on it.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, it was Deborah, the warrior princess from the Book of Judges on it. Yeah, it's a beautiful summer day and we're gonna answer people's thoughtful questions about poetry and metaphor in the Bible.

Jon Collins: Yeah. Thanks for sending them in. I had a great time discussing poetry and metaphor with you. The poetry video is out. Right? But the metaphor video is yet to come out.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, the metaphor video will come out in fall 2018.

Jon Collins: In the fall. It will be a season five. It is cool.

Tim Mackie: It's shaping up to look awesome. Yeah, really neat.

Jon Collins: So, let's jump right in. Ivan.

Ivan: Hello, Bible Project. I am Ivan from El Salvador and I have a few question. I want to ask some question about poetry in the Bible. How do you identify poetry? For example, in Genesis 1, some people say Genesis 1 is poetry, some people say Genesis 1 is actual

## Metaphor and Poetry

history. How can you identify if it's poetry? Because I know in the Bible there's a lot of poetry, and there's a lot of narrative. How do you identify that kind of stuff?

I want to say thank you because you are a great inspiration for me. I'm a Christian artist, I do Christian comics and you really, really inspire me. I want to say thank you for sharing the gospel through sharing the Bible, through sharing Jesus, and please never stop. Keep doing your good work. We're going to be watching from El Salvador. Thank you.

Tim Mackie: Sweet. Thanks Ivan. That's a perceptive question and a question lots of people ask

Jon Collins: how to identify poetry versus...

Tim Mackie: Yes. But the specific question applied to Genesis Chapter 1.

Jon Collins: No, that's a great question.

Tim Mackie: So maybe just to clarify, and just because the way you asked the question is actually the way many people ask it, so you're asking what the difference between poetry and narrative is in general. But notice even Ivan, this isn't about you. This is about how we've been shaped to have this conversation in the modern era. What you asked was some people say Genesis 1 is poetry, some people say Genesis 1 is history.

So just notice poetry is a type of literature, actual history refers to events. So the real question that we want to be asking is, how we tell narrative apart from poetry? And what we assume that the role of biblical narrative is simply to give us ancient video camera footage of the actual history as opposed to narrative being an artistic representation of events.

So I want to reframe the question to. The question ought to be, is Genesis 1 poetry or narrative in terms of its literary form?

Jon Collins: So that's great. Now, we talked before, and I don't remember which episode it was and what the context was, but we talked about the pipe. This is not a pipe.

## Metaphor and Poetry

- Tim Mackie: That's right.
- Jon Collins: What was that in context of?
- Tim Mackie: It was in our introduction to reading biblical narrative.
- Jon Collins: Okay.
- Tim Mackie: Yeah, just that. Yeah, it's a famous painting of a pipe that says...
- Jon Collins: This is not a pipe.
- Tim Mackie: ...on the painting, "This is not pipe."
- Jon Collins: In French.
- Tim Mackie: Yeah, that's French.
- Jon Collins: And Le pipe [SP] is the only part I remember.
- Tim Mackie: [unintelligible 00:04:08.04].
- Jon Collins: What? You know the whole French?
- Tim Mackie: René Magritte was the painter.
- Jon Collins: And the point of that was yes, this looks just like a pipe, but it's not. It's a painting of a pipe. And it's kind of a mind bender because what's the distinction? Why are you making a distinction between an actual pipe and a painting of a pipe? And I think that's what you're saying with history. History refers to actual events that happened in space-time.
- Tim Mackie: Correct.
- Jon Collins: And as soon as you then write down those events, what you have is not the event.
- Tim Mackie: Right?
- Jon Collins: You have the writing of the event.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: Yeah, you have a written representation of the event.

Jon Collins: Yeah. And then you can talk about how accurate that was to the actual event. You can talk about all sorts of things that there's different ways you could write down an event.

Tim Mackie: Correct.

Jon Collins: You could write it down like...What are those people called in a courtroom that are just typing down every single word? A stenographer?

Tim Mackie: Stenographer, yeah.

Jon Collins: You could act like that where you're just trying to capture. And obviously, it's impossible.

[05:00]

Tim Mackie: Even a stenographer's report is a painting of the pipe because the stenographer is sitting in one location in the room and can't see what one person's doing behind their desks.

Jon Collins: They're not typing out what everyone's doing. They're just typing out what people are saying.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, all they can type out is what people are saying. That's correct. Yeah, that's right.

Jon Collins: But they don't know your intentions, they don't know your facial expression.

Tim Mackie: They don't know what somebody's whispering. They don't know what somebody's thinking. They don't know lots of things.

Jon Collins: So you can read that and you can get a good idea what happened in the courtroom that day, but that's not what happened in the courtroom.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: But even then, a stenographer's report of what happened in the courtroom is not what actually happened.

Jon Collins: And then you got the people in the courtroom...

Tim Mackie: It's a representation of what happens from that person's point of view.

Jon Collins: Then you have people in the courtroom who come just to paint a picture of what's going on because they don't allow cameras in.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, that's right?

Jon Collins: So they're representing the courtroom that day in a different medium and that painting is not what happened that day. It's a painting of what happened...

Tim Mackie: It's a representation of what happened.

Jon Collins: And so every time you record something, you are making decisions of how you're going to do it and what you're going to emphasize and why you're doing it. And this is something I've done a lot, is when I think, "Is this history?" what I really want to know is did this actually happen?

Tim Mackie: Correct, yeah. And that's an important question.

Jon Collins: Yeah. And I think that's what people want to know with Genesis 1 and 2 - did that actually happen?

Tim Mackie: Did it actually happen? But that's a different question than asking, what's the literally form of this text.

Jon Collins: So let's first ask what's the literary form of Genesis 1 and 2.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, yeah. This is part of your real question, Ivan is just how do you tell poetry apart from narrative? So this is back in the first episode of the podcast. We talked about this. Hebrew poetry has a clear set of markers that you can tell it apart.

Usually, English translations or whatever translation you're reading in, many translations often format poetry differently. They break it

## Metaphor and Poetry

up into short lines that are kind of parallel with each other. And that's mimicking what's going on in Hebrew poetry. It's short lines of three to five words set in couplets or sometimes triads. So two lines that are parallel or three lines set in parallelism.

Jon Collins: So you're saying one really quick way to check is, did the translators format it?

Tim Mackie: Yeah, you're going to see it formatted as poetry. Like, "Oh, this poetry." But our translators don't always do that. There's all kinds of palms that are not set apart as poetry. Especially in the New Testament in Paul's letters, he often will break out in a little poem and it's not formatted that way in most English translations. So that really is the key marker is short, dense lines set in parallel relationships.

So however you can write a narrative where there's lots of repetition, stylistic repetition, however, it's a narrative. And he says that this happened. But a narrative can be poetic. And that's definitely what's going on in Genesis 1. Genesis one is a highly stylized poetic representation of...

Jon Collins: It's kind of a hybrid between narratives and poetry?

Tim Mackie: No, it's poetic narrative.

Jon Collins: Poetic narrative.

Tim Mackie: Yeah.

Jon Collins: But that sounds like a hybrid.

Tim Mackie: Oh, sorry, it's a narrative that has...

Jon Collins: A lot of poetics in it.

Tim Mackie: ...a lot of poetics stylistic elements. If I could just show you charts, Ivan, I have all these charts on repeated words and repeated phrases in Genesis 1. It's a masterpiece. I mean, somebody sat down and counted how many words will appear and what sentences. It's

## Metaphor and Poetry

amazing. Genesis 1 is amazing. So it's highly stylized and artistic in its arrangement and design and composition.

Jon Collins: But it's not Hebrew poetry.

Tim Mackie: But it's not Hebrew poetry. It doesn't have short couplets, parallel lines. And it has a narrative form. "In the beginning and God did this and God said this." And that was what happened. So it has a clear form of narrative, but it's poetic narrative. And so we shouldn't think of these necessarily poetry and narrative as hard and fast categories.

Jon Collins: We have been talking about them that way.

Tim Mackie: Well, yeah. And they are clearly recognizable, but there is also a spectrum.

Jon Collins: Sure.

Tim Mackie: They're like two extreme ends of a spectrum. And in between those you can have more nuanced categories where a poem can tell a story.

Jon Collins: Sure.

Tim Mackie: Or where a narrative can be stylized with lots of repetition that's like poetry even though it's not poetry.

Jon Collins: It can be in a structure of a poem with the couplets, and the short lines, but then it can draw from elements of narrative and then it could be trying to tell a story. It may have the character and a plot and all those things.

Tim Mackie: That's right.

Jon Collins: And in the same way, it can be the structure of a narrative but have all these poetic elements...

Tim Mackie: Correct.

Jon Collins: ...of repeated words and...



## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: Yeah, things set in parallel to each other.

Jon Collins: This is an example of the structurally narrative, but with a lot of poetic elements.

Tim Mackie: Correct, yeah.

[10:00]

Jon Collins: Genesis 1.

Tim Mackie: Genesis 1. Oh, did so great. We're just starting to work on concepting our series, the video series where we're going to explore literary and theological themes in Genesis 1 and 2.

Jon Collins: That's right.

Tim Mackie: So I've been thinking a lot about that.

Jon Collins: It's going to be exciting.

Tim Mackie: Oh, it's going to be awesome. Good question, Ivan. Thank you.

Jon Collins: Can I poke at that more?

Tim Mackie: Oh, yeah.

Jon Collins: You know, obviously the debate behind Genesis 1 being narrative or poetry, often is because people want to know how did the world actually get created. Right?

Tim Mackie: Oh, sure.

Jon Collins: And if it is narrative, does that mean that it was trying to be kind of video camera footage of sorts, but just then in a poetic way?

Tim Mackie: Well, that's a narrative presentation that has clear...You know, the shape of that narrative goes from Genesis 1:1 to Genesis Chapter 2, verse 3.

Jon Collins: It's the creation story.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: The chapter breaks actually disrupt the original form of that narrative. What's interesting is that the author of Genesis or the composer, the arranger of Genesis, has put that first narrative representation of creation alongside another one that starts in Genesis Chapter two, verse 4, and it goes all the way to the expulsion of humanity from Eden in Genesis Chapter 3, verse 24.

But Genesis 1 and then the narrative in Genesis 2, they're both creation narratives in terms of they begin with chaotic disorder and they move with God inhabiting the world with animals and then humans to take care of it. But the narrative chronology, the sequence of events in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are different. They're different.

So Genesis 2 has a one-day scheme, Genesis 1 has a seven-day scheme. Genesis 1, it goes, "Land, then animals, then humans." Genesis 2 goes, "Land, then humans, then animals."

Jon Collins: So you think it's tipping his hat right away of saying, "This isn't security footage kind of representation of if you were there when creation was ordered as much as it is a representation in order to communicate really important ideas."

Tim Mackie: Yeah, that's right. The biblical narratives are comfortable putting narrative representations of creation next to each other that don't agree in all kinds of details that we think are the most important ones. But they clearly don't, because they just put those two next to each other. What they think are important are the thematic theological themes that are connecting those two stories.

And then you go on. You go Psalm 74 is a creation poem. And it has God slung a multi-headed dragon and ripping it apart to make the sky and the sea. Or Psalm 78 ends with a creation poem of God building his temple above the waters and the land is his footstool. So there's many creation narratives in the Old Testament.

Jon Collins: Interesting.

Tim Mackie: And they all are different representations. Illustration I'm often using now is, you can understand the universe by looking at a Hubble telescope photograph. You can also understand the night

## Metaphor and Poetry

sky by looking at Vincent van Gogh's famous painting, "Starry Night." They are both representations of the night sky. And they're both faithful representations of the night sky based on the purpose of each of those mediums.

And so what we should do is honor the diversity of representations and not try and undo them and make them all one because we want to know what really happened. Biblical authors are more concerned to tell us the meaning of what happened oftentimes than just simply what happened. So, of course, something happened. We're here. We are sitting here. Creation happened. The universe came into existence in some way.

Jon Collins: And it's ordered to be this way.

Tim Mackie: The Old Testament gives us multiple portraits of what that was about, and I don't think we should try and reduce them all to one formula.

Jon Collins: Yeah, cool. Chris Powers. This is such a cool name.

Tim Mackie: It's awesome name.

Jon Collins: I wish I had that name. Feels either like a, I don't know, like a WWE II fighter or like just a superhero.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, Chris is your hero.

Jon Collins: He has a question.

Tim Mackie: And you're from Illinois.

Chris Powers: Hi Jon and Tim. I'm Chris Powers from Carbondale, Illinois. You talked about the metaphor of time as a possession and used it as an example of a modern metaphor. Then you said that the Bible doesn't view time in this way. However, in Psalm 31:15, David says, "My times are in your hand," and in Ephesians 5:16, Paul writes that "We should redeem the time." Don't these phrases suggest that both David and Paul view time figuratively as a tangible and valuable possession? Thanks so much. God bless.

## Metaphor and Poetry

[15:00]

Tim Mackie: Yeah, this is good. This was actually a little detail in our conversation about metaphor schemes time as a possession.

Jon Collins: Yeah. How much had you thought about that before you mentioned it in the podcast?

Tim Mackie: Oh, like not at all.

Jon Collins: It seems like kind of just a...

Tim Mackie: Yeah, it was kind of one. However, though, I do think the biblical author's conception of time is fundamentally different. That's a whole thing that I would love to learn more about. My point in that moment was just the Bible isn't filled with the same metaphors of time as a possession that we use.

Jon Collins: We use it so much.

Tim Mackie: We use it so much. "I lost time." "Spare some time." "Give some time." "Gaining some time." "Buy some time." And the biblical authors don't use that kind of vocabulary.

However, Chris, you identified two interesting texts. One in Psalm 31, "My times are in your hand," David says to God, and then in Ephesians Chapter 5, Paul talks about "Redeeming the time." So I went and looked both those up and thought about those because of your question, Chris. Here's what's interesting.

In neither one of those cases is time my possession. So in Psalm 31, David's whole point is, "My time belongs to you." "My time belongs to God." So time isn't my possessions.

Jon Collins: It's God's possession.

Tim Mackie: It's something God has and that He providentially orchestrates.

Jon Collins: So you could say, "I'm saving time for God," or "I'm saving God's time."

Tim Mackie: Yeah.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Jon Collins: That'd be a funny way to talk. Like, "You just saved me some of God's time."

Tim Mackie: Yeah. And even in Ephesians Chapter 5, when it says, "Redeem the time," it's not because time is mine. It's because time is evil. What he says is, "Redeeming the time because the days are evil." And redeem is Exodus language. That's purchasing a slave's freedom to release them into the promise land.

Jon Collins: So the metaphor is "The time is..."

Tim Mackie: In slavery to evil.

Jon Collins: In slavery to evil."

Tim Mackie: Yeah. Time's a captive of evil.

Jon Collins: Time is captive. Oh, that's cool.

Tim Mackie: And we in the power of the new human, Jesus, are able to free time from its slavery to evil and release it into the new creation.

Jon Collins: So that's a great example of—

Tim Mackie: What a cool metaphor?

Jon Collins: It is a cool metaphor. So the common western metaphor is "time as a possession."

Tim Mackie: Yeah, "time's my possession."

Jon Collins: Time is my position.

Tim Mackie: So if I redeem it, it means I maximize it for my purposes.

Jon Collins: Yeah. Right. And that's actually how I would typically read that verse. "Redeem the time." Okay, maximize my time. I'm not going to sleep in, I'm not going to whatever. Which isn't necessarily a completely off the mark.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, that's right.

## Metaphor and Poetry

- Jon Collins: But You're saying the metaphor that the Bible's drawing upon is—
- Tim Mackie: Paul is using...when you look at his use of the word redeem—
- Jon Collins: The metaphoric scheme in his head, is time as a captive time.
- Tim Mackie: It's the Exodus scheme.
- Jon Collins: Time is in slavery.
- Tim Mackie: Yeah. Actually, it's bigger than that. It's just the world is in slavery to evil and selfishness. And time is one example that can generate many different types of people are enslaved evil.
- Jon Collins: Well, when he says time, is he referring to like the age.
- Tim Mackie: Yeah, exactly.
- Jon Collins: How we talk about age of sin and death?
- Tim Mackie: That's right. Yeah, that's right.
- Jon Collins: So we're in an age that is captive, and we can rescue the age.
- Tim Mackie: Yeah. We can be a part of redeeming the time, freeing it from slavery.
- Jon Collins: But redeeming time seems kind of triad, like, "Oh, I'm going to save an hour." But rescuing and age...
- Tim Mackie: Yeah, that's right.
- Jon Collins: ...that sounds epic. Right?
- Tim Mackie: Yeah, yeah. Again, our English word redeem has become bland from its biblical meaning. So think "purchase" or "rescue." And purchase in terms of purchase something that's enslaved so that you can free it.
- Jon Collins: But he's not talking about like, organize your calendar better. That's not Paul's point.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: Oh no, totally not.

Jon Collins: His point is that we live in an era that is enslaved to evil, and we can be a part of rescuing this era.

Tim Mackie: Totally. Yeah, and actually it's the crowning...

Jon Collins: It's a battle cry.

Tim Mackie: ...crowning statement of a whole series of metaphors in Ephesians 5 where he talks about "You were formerly dark, but now you are light in the Lord," says Genesis 1. And then he talks about "The fruit of the light." So all of a sudden the light grows fruit.

Jon Collins: It's like a mixing metaphors now.

Tim Mackie: Yeah. And what's the fruit of the light? Goodness, righteousness, and truth. New humanity. Jon

Collins: Yeah.

Tim Mackie: And then he says, "Don't participate in the unfruitful actions of the dark, rather shine light on them."

[20:00]

Jon Collins: Wow. So light is this type of tree that grows fruit. Dark is this kind of thing that grows unfruit.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, totally. And then he says, "For this reason," it says - he quotes a hymn that they sang in the church, "Wake up, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Messiah will shine on you." So now dark is associated with death, and light associated with resurrection and new creation.

Jon Collins: This is so saturated in metaphors.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: Oh, this whole moral, yeah, Ephesians 5...And this is very typical for Paul. His mind is steeped in the metaphors of the Hebrew Bible. And so he will mix them and combine them creatively. This is the whole point that we will make in the metaphor video is the early biblical narratives, especially Genesis, are the seedbed of the entire Biblical metaphorical imagination. Light, dark death, life, fruit is all Genesis 1 to 3 imagery.

Then when he says, "Redeem the time for the days are evil," he's venturing into the Exodus narrative to talk about time as a captive to evil. Yeah, you're participating in the redemption of creation. So he's not talking about, yeah, get more efficient with your calendar. He's talking about loving your neighbor as yourself, and loving God.

Jon Collins: Living like you are ushering in a new era.

Tim Mackie: Yeah. Living as if you're in the new Garden of Eden, even though we're in between time.

Jon Collins: Beautiful.

Tim Mackie: Yeah. Chris Powers, thank you. Good question.

Jon Collins: Thanks, Chris. Jackson from San Luis Obispo. The happiest place on earth, I think that's their motto.

Tim Mackie: Oh man, that is a great town.

Jon Collins: That is a great town.

Tim Mackie: There are a few times and it seems kind of dreamy.

Jackson: Hi, this is Jackson from San Luis Obispo, California. I wonder if you guys could provide maybe a short list of other commonly used metaphor schemes throughout the scriptures. You know, sort of the base layer metaphors. To have those in my mind as I'm reading through scripture I think would be really beneficial. Thanks so much for all you guys do.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, man, that list of basic metaphors would be really helpful. Wouldn't it?



## Metaphor and Poetry

Jon Collins: Yeah, that would be a fun project.

Tim Mackie: It would be the point that we're really making in those metaphor conversations and that the video will be about is what we just said a moment ago. The book of Genesis is providing you with the core base set of visual images and their meaning for the whole rest of the biblical story.

So I've come across that idea in many different types of places, but I've never seen it brought together as a way of introducing people to metaphor in the Bible. That's kind of, it's a new idea for me to bring it together that way. And I've been test driving it in lots of different settings and I think it really works.

Jon Collins: So you would start in Genesis, not in the Psalms.

Tim Mackie: Yeah. What the Psalms are doing is just riffing off of visual themes and metaphors that by the time you get to Psalms in the Old Testament—

Jon Collins: The encyclopedia of production has been set.

Tim Mackie: Correct? Yeah, that's right. The mental encyclopedia that Genesis gave you has been well developed by the Book of Psalms. So can you provide a list? I bet you could do it, Jackson. Seriously, here's the mission. Read and reread the book of Genesis 50 times.

Jon Collins: Woo, that's a lot of times.

Tim Mackie: I'm serious. This is how [someone? 00:23:38] did. Just meditate.

Jon Collins: The whole book of Genesis, 50 times.

Tim Mackie: Okay, I'm sorry.

Jon Collins: 50 chapters, 50 times.

Tim Mackie: Oh, that's a good point though. 50, 50 times. Okay. Do it a dozen times.

Jon Collins: Okay. I just saved you a lot of times Jackson.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: Just keep a list of the most repeated words and themes and you'll get a list of about 75 items, something. Some of them will be real basic day and night. Light and dark, fruit versus wilderness, life, death, but other ones will be interesting like wells. The meaning of wells were cisterns or springs in the book of Genesis or the tent or the door of the tents.

Jon Collins: So you're saying every time there's repeated words, there's an underlying metaphor.

Tim Mackie: No, I'm saying, oh, the book of Genesis by means of narrative repetition is building an encyclopedia of images for you and what they mean so that when you venture out into the rest of the Bible, whenever anything happens at the door of somebody's tent—

Jon Collins: So, you're saying if Genesis...

Tim Mackie: This is a design pattern is.

Jon Collins: Okay. This is more design patterns and metaphor?

Tim Mackie: Well, they are the same thing. The design patterns of Genesis...

Jon Collins: Become metaphors.

Tim Mackie: ...stock your cabinets full of when a narrative takes place at the entrance of a tent or a narrative takes place at a well or in wilderness you...

Jon Collins: It's cluing you into themes.

Tim Mackie: The themes of what that narrative is focusing on, and the theme that is developing as the whole biblical story moves on.

[25:00]

Jon Collins: So you saying that an action at the door of a tent is a design pattern?

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: Yeah.

Jon Collins: Connect that to metaphor for me.

Tim Mackie: Oh, well then. So when you go into biblical poetry and the Prophets in the book of Psalms and you have a whole poem about, "Oh, how I longed to be in your tent O Lord. Bring me to the entrance of your tent, and so on." But then they start calling the tent, the Holy Mountain or the garden or these kinds of things.

So what they're doing is they just assume that you've read Genesis, like nobody's business and that you know that the tent and the garden, these were all Eden images. And this is all about the return of humanity to Eden, but we keep screwing it up. So that's what I mean is that Genesis provides you by means of repetition if you're tracking with the list of images.

Jon Collins: I'm going to read through Genesis multiple times, I'm going to get a list of repeated images.

Tim Mackie: Narrative images.

Jon Collins: Narrative images. And then I'm going to say, "Okay, look at all these repeated images." And I'm going to go...

Tim Mackie: Just keep my radar up for those images now.

Jon Collins: Pay attention to one of those show up and what's happening around them.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, yeah, that's right. And you usually see it occur in patterns. Baby Moses is thrown into the waters in an ark. He's placed in an ark. It's the same word for Noah's Ark.

Jon Collins: I wouldn't know that in my English translation.

Tim Mackie: That's true. That's unfortunate. And then he goes into the wilderness and the next narrative he's standing on a mountain where he's meeting God in the fire. You're like, "Oh, wow, that's the entire Exodus narrative of Israel in a nutshell."

Jon Collins: Going through the waters and then meeting God on the mountain.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: Through the waters, through the wilderness up to the mountain where they meet with God. So Moses' story is the whole Exodus story in a nutshell, just in two chapters.

Jon Collins: But I feel like we're talking about design patterns, not metaphor.

Tim Mackie: We are. The design pattern, they're the same thing.

Jon Collins: They are the same.

Tim Mackie: Sorry. How design pattern works in biblical narrative, once you get those patterns, then you go into the biblical poetry in the prophets and the Psalms and they will start using...

Jon Collins: And they're just riffing on the pattern?

Tim Mackie: ...the images of those design patterns. But they're doing it now and poetic metaphor. So you can have in one poem, like in Psalm 46, we looked at, "you can have the high rock, the temple with the garden of Eden Stream, with the chaotic waters that are the nations."

Jon Collins: So with the high rock we were able to boil it down to a scheme which said, "The human ideal is just like dry ground or the mountain garden."

Tim Mackie: Yeah, that's right.

Jon Collins: So are you saying that once I get this list, I've read through Genesis 12 times and I get this list, should I be able to then create those sentences?

Tim Mackie: I think so. Genesis created the core schemes for you.

Jon Collins: Yeah. Well, give me the tent one. So like, being at someone's tent door or if someone's tent is...

Tim Mackie: Oh, it's being near the ideal. A narrative where someone's at the door of a tent then is a narrative about, Ooh, they have a chance to get back to Eden or to blow it and be expelled.

Jon Collins: It's the crossroads.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: It's the crossroads moment at the door of the tent. And so there's all these narratives where Lot, for example, when the divine visitors come to his house in Sodom and he blows his chance at the door of his house - which is set right next to a narrative about Abraham who redeems his chance when the divine visitors come to the door of his tent.

And you're like, "It seems so weird." There's two narratives next to each other in Genesis about...

Jon Collins: Doors and tents.

Tim Mackie: ...two guys encountering angels at the doors of their tents? Until you realize, "Oh, that's the expulsion narrative." God assigns angelic guardians...

Jon Collins: Oh, to guard the tent.

Tim Mackie: at the door or Eden. So human's being expelled from the door of Eden and then later narratives of people encountering angels at the door of their tent or their house become repetitions. And then you go to the book of Psalms. And then the book of Psalms has been tracking with all this and they will poetically explore poems about, "Oh, if only I could be..." "Better is one day in your house, O Lord. I wish I could go up to the doors of the temple and this kind of thing."

Jon Collins: Got It.

Tim Mackie: Yeah.

Jon Collins: Sweet.

Tim Mackie: The Biblical visual imagination is super unified and cohesive.

Jon Collins: All right, Jackson. You've got some homework.

Tim Mackie: You just got to read Genesis 50 times again and then...

Jon Collins: It's 12 now.

Tim Mackie: Oh, 12. Okay.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Jon Collins: I mean, you can do extra.

Tim Mackie: All right.

Jon Collins: Thank you. Tyler from Vancouver, Washington. Just right across the river. Hey, Tyler.

Tyler: Hey Jon and Tim. My name is Tyler. I live in Vancouver, Washington, and my question is this. You talked about how the biblical authors are using metaphoric imagery to describe the abstract ideas of the new heavens and the new earth, and it seemed like you were talking about that with like Eden and creation. So my question is, does that mean or should we think about Eden and the new heavens and new earth as symbolic places or are the actual real places? And if they are, how do we understand them if the imagery is metaphoric as opposed to descriptive? If that makes sense.

[30:00]

Tim Mackie: Yeah. That's a great question, Tyler. My first response might be to clarify and to say, a real place and a symbolic place, those aren't mutually exclusive. Actually, in fact, most of my experience of symbolic places are real places

Jon Collins: Wait. Say that again. "My experience of symbolic."

Tim Mackie: In other words, most of the symbolic places that I can think of and that I've experienced, are in fact real places.

Jon Collins: Give me an example.

Tim Mackie: Oh, the neighborhood I grew up in.

Jon Collins: That's a symbolic place?

Tim Mackie: Yeah, yeah. When I go to that real place, it's full of symbolic meaning of my early childhood, of my first experiences doing graffiti and vandalism, my first kiss. You know?

Jon Collins: Yeah.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: When I mean symbol...we had this conversation at the beginning of the metaphor episodes. When we say something is metaphor...

Jon Collins: It doesn't mean it's not real.

Tim Mackie: ...it doesn't mean it's not real. What we're just saying is the language I'm using to describe it shouldn't be mistaken...

Jon Collins: As the thing itself.

Tim Mackie: ...one for one as an image of the reality. It's an image pointing to a reality that normal language isn't adequate to describe. So this is true. Whenever later biblical authors refer back to the Garden of Eden, they are primarily concerned about Eden's symbolic meaning as the image of the ideal of God and humans together.

Jon Collins: Right.

Tim Mackie: They don't seem to be that interested about it as a historical place on a map. That's just not how biblical authors talk about Eden.

Jon Collins: Because they never actually placed it on a map for you or how do you know they weren't interested in that? There's no exploration?

[crosstalk 00:32:04]

Tim Mackie: Yeah, totally. And when they do use Eden imagery, they're often doing it in a way that frustrates any attempt to locate it on a map. So for example, when the narrator in Genesis 2 says, "Out of Eden flowed the Nile, the Tigris, and Euphrates, and the Gihon, - which actually in our episode about it, I was mistaken - I've since done a lot more homework on those rivers. The Gihon, which is one of the rivers that flows out of Eden, that title, Gihon is used to describe only one other water source in the whole Bible. And it's the water source of Jerusalem in the Book of Kings. It's used three times the Book of Kings, and I think one other time.

So out of Eden flows the source of the Nile...

Jon Collins: Yea, down in Egypt.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: ...the source of Jerusalem's water source, and the Tigris and Euphrates—

Jon Collins: And they're completely different.

Tim Mackie: Totally different places geographically. And the point isn't geography. It's symbolic meaning. Because what that narrative is doing is it's setting you up to view Eden, Jerusalem, and Assyria and Babylon as all Eden-like places that you're going to come across later in the biblical story. And once you get there, that's exactly what happens, right? The Israelites go down to Egypt, Jacob and his descendants, and Pharaoh says, "Here's the goodness of the land. I said it before you," but it's a false Eden. It's a false Eden because they go there to hide safely from the famine in the real Israelite Eden, and they end up in slavery in the false Eden. And had to replace with Babylon.

So the whole point is even in Genesis 2, where it's giving you a description of what you think is the map, in fact, the authors can really interested in the symbolic meaning. I mean, there's a whole other debate here about what we mean when we say a real event or a real place. My point is simply when the biblical authors use Eden Imagery, they use it for its symbolic meaning.

Jon Collins: But they do believe there is a real human ideal...

Tim Mackie: Yes, that's right.

Jon Collins: ...time and place in human history and God created it to begin that way, it was corrupted, God will recreate it.

Tim Mackie: That's right. That really will happen.

Jon Collins: That really will happen.

Tim Mackie: Really will be a new creation, I think the apostles and prophets really. Just like I believe my wife is a real. When I refer to her as a fireball.

Jon Collins: Does she know you uses her example?



## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: I know. I don't think she listens to the podcast. In fact, I know she doesn't listen to the podcast.

Jon Collins: Someone is going to tell her.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, someone's going to tell her. So to say something has symbolic meaning doesn't mean it's not real. That's the basic response, Tyler. And what it does mean to say something is symbolic is to say, the most important thing about this person or this place isn't what you could see or notice even if you could actually go there. It's in me representing them with this metaphor or image that is going to help you understand the meaning of this place. So I think that's the basic point.

[35:00]

Jon Collins: Great. Thanks, Tyler. Kerrie from Australia, from down under.

Kerrie: Hey guys. My name is Kerrie and I'm from Australia. Christians consider the Bible a book that influences the way that we live. In the realms of creativity, how should biblical poetry influence Christians today in their writing and in their creative writing? Thanks, guys. Love your work.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, that's a great question, Kerrie. You know, one way to think about it is...It's interesting you're asking it as a question. You live in Australia. I don't know where, but I know at least from my friends that live in a couple different large cities in Australia, it's very much a post-Christian environment like most western cities are. So it's interesting that we ask that as a question. Should the Bible influence our writing and creative writing or art?

Jon Collins: Right.

Tim Mackie: The entire history of Western civilization...

Jon Collins: In n general, and then specifically writing and art.

## Metaphor and Poetry

- Tim Mackie: Yeah, in literature and art is entirely...
- Jon Collins: Highly influenced.
- Tim Mackie: ...inspired by biblical themes and imagery. Sistine Chapel, Beethoven or Bach [SP], these are all followers of Jesus who were writing and exploring biblical themes.
- Jon Collins: And even people who aren't following Jesus we're so saturated in these themes and at the Bible. You can't help without maybe even realizing it that you're riffing on them. But some of our great writers, they know what they're doing.
- Tim Mackie: Totally.
- Jon Collins: So we were just talking about Steinbeck recently. Mike Steinbeck. I don't know if he followed Jesus, but he knew what he was doing. He was riffing off the Bible.
- Tim Mackie: Totally. I'm trying to...Somebody...I can't think of the title right now. I have a friend who it was like a cultural history of the influence of the Bible on Western civilization, but it was a popular level book just giving like an aerial view of how the Bible has shaped the history of Western film music, literature, painting and I can't think of what it is right now. I thought it was the book that changed the world, but that's not it.
- Jon Collins: I think if you spend a lot of time in biblical poetry is going to influence the way you think?
- Tim Mackie: It just does, yeah.
- Jon Collins: And then it will influence your creative work. But your creative work will be your own and it'll have influences from other places as well. So it's not going to just be mimicking...
- Tim Mackie: Yeah, totally.
- Jon Collins: ...ancient Hebrew poetry.
- Tim Mackie: Yeah, that's right. I've actually thought about this, you can watch this process happen within the Bible itself when you have the way

## Metaphor and Poetry

the book of Psalms reflects back on what we were just talking about - the narrative images of Genesis and Exodus and the temple - but it recombines them in all these new creative ways.

Remember in our discussion about Isaiah's takes the river of Eden, but he reverses it?

Jon Collins: Yeah.

Tim Mackie: The river becomes...

[crosstalk 00:38:11]

Tim Mackie: It's rivering back as one river back into Eden. That's so creative. And he never says, "Hey, dear reader. What I'm doing is being influenced by the Garden of Eden story right now." It just comes out of it naturally. And I think that's when you just immersed yourself in biblical poetry, it's inevitable. It will begin to shape how you think about the world and that can't come out.

Jon Collins: But we have our own metaphoric schemes that are unique from the Bible and they're not necessarily bad.

Tim Mackie: Totally. That's right.

Jon Collins: And so there'll be a blending.

Tim Mackie: It has to be.

Jon Collins: It has to be

Tim Mackie: For you to image God, Kerrie in your own creative work and writing means taking what you're learning from the scriptures and what you're learning from your own life experience...

Jon Collins: Adapting, translating [unintelligible 00:38:59].

Tim Mackie: ...and making it all one.

Jon Collins: Yeah.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: I mean, what are the Bible project videos except your and I's life experience learning communicated through that medium. And we all have our own kind of versions of that. So yeah, it's good.

Jon Collins: Go create.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, go forth and make good things.

Jon Collins: Bring order out of chaos.

Tim Mackie: That's right.

Jon Collins: Clayton from Alabama. Another down under of sorts.

Tim Mackie: Well, I guess we're up in the northwest.

Jon Collins: Yeah.

Clayton: Hi. My name is Clayton Cullaton and I'm an Area Director for InterVarsity in Alabama. Your conversation about metaphor seemed to include a painstaking process of proving and affirming the driving metaphors in schemes that you focused on. Are there any guardrails that you would suggest for communities of lay people, like college students who might uncover schemes beyond the two that you mentioned, or is there a list or resource that could serve as a reference to help us catch the essential schemes as we engage Scripture? The work of the Bible project is helping unlock the Bible for the Bible belt, and my students, and I thank you.

[40:00]

Jon Collins: The part of this is a similar question that we answered of the homework for Jackson.

Tim Mackie: Oh yeah, yeah. Read Genesis 12 times.

Jon Collins: Maybe if we have enough people do it, we can compile some sort of list.

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: Yeah, yeah. I wish I could have a conversation with Clayton, and then you could clarify what the question is. My hunch is that behind it is a concern that you're just going to start mixing and matching images and metaphors and you just make up your own.

[crosstalk 00:40:39]

Tim Mackie: Or allegorical Bible or something.

Jon Collins: Allegorizing. What the word?

Tim Mackie: Yeah, allegorizing.

Jon Collins: Allegorizing the Bible too much or in the wrong way so that it becomes something that it wasn't supposed to be.

Tim Mackie: That's right, yeah.

Jon Collins: How do you make sure you're not slipping into that?

Tim Mackie: Well, it's similar to our conversation about design patterns. I'm still trying to learn and articulate to myself even, but when the author or composer of Genesis has arranged story after story after story with keywords keep reappearing - "The waters" or "good and evil" or "life and death," then to me, those are the indications of authorial intent or purpose. Somebody has designed these stories with these key repeated words and images.

So for me, that's the guardrail is, "Can I observe and show..." I mean you call it a painstaking process of proving and affirming the metaphors, but for me what I'm doing is just trying to anchor it in somebody else's communication purpose. That this is a biblical author trying to make this point. I'm not just making this up. Jon

Collins: Right?

Tim Mackie: And so for me, the key criteria are, can I show that these key, rare, repeated words occur just in these points and they have these meanings? And you can see that I'm not just making this up. Because you're right, the history, especially a Christian interpretation is that when we untether ourselves from what these

## Metaphor and Poetry

authors are trying to communicate through the narratives or poetry, and we just start combining images because they combined in my mind, you know, then I think we're in danger of just remaking the Bible in our own image.

So that's why this is in 'How to Read the Bible' series is because I want to learn how to discern what the biblical authors are trying to say to me, not what I'm trying to say to me.

Jon Collins: Yeah. Cool. Maggie from Wisconsin.

Maggie: Hi, Tim and John. This is Maggie from Wisconsin. I really liked at the end of the last podcast how you shared those stories about Jesus and how he brought that chaotic waters metaphor forward. Can you share any other stories about Jesus or other stories in the new testament that bring those metaphors forward? Thanks.

Tim Mackie: Oh, man, we could go all day.

Jon Collins: Yeah.

Tim Mackie: Well, here's two that come to the top of my head. So I've done a lot of work in the Gospel of Matthew, and the way that Matthew redeploys the high mountain rock, cosmic Eden Mountain theme, he's full-on integrated that into his work. So if you trace just through the events of all the events in the Gospel of Matthew that happened on a high mountain, he says, it's remarkable. Every one of them is playing off of key imagery from the Book of Genesis really.

Jon Collins: The Sermon on the Mount.

Tim Mackie: The first one is the mountain where Jesus is tested. He's in the wilderness, but then He goes to a high mountain where He's tested about having authority over all creation. That's Genesis 1 and 2. On the Eden mountain, humanity is given authority over all creation.

Jon Collins: So here's Jesus a human on a mountain.

Tim Mackie: He's taken to a mountain and the question is, how will He gained authority? Is He going to give His allegiance to the evil powers then gain authority through?

## Metaphor and Poetry

Jon Collins: It's him replaying the new Adam. It's him being the new Adam.

Tim Mackie: It's Jesus' replay of Genesis 3 happening on a high Eden mountain in Matthew Chapter 4. He overcomes that test and then He's in the wilderness, and then the next mountain is in the next chapter. He goes up to a high mountain and delivers his new Messianic Torah, the Sermon on the Mount. Just like Moses on the cosmic mountain of Sinai delivering the Torah to Israel.

Then in Matthew chapter, I think is 16 or 17, I think it's 17, He goes up on the high mountain and He's transformed before the other three disciples and He looks like the high priest. He's shining white garments. He looks like the glowing son of man from Daniel Chapter 7. And all of these are things that take place on the in the cosmic Eden mountain.

In Daniel Chapter 7, the son of man is a human figure that's raised high up into God's presence high on the cosmic mountain. And then the gospel ends with Jesus on a high mountain commissioning the disciples to go out and to be fruitful and multiply. It's back to Genesis one again, but they are going to be fruitful and multiply by making disciples. So that's a good example of Matthew's totally tracked with all of the cosmic mountain.

[45:00]

Jon Collins: So, let me ask you. Was Jesus then, you know, he was tracking obviously with...

Tim Mackie: Oh, totally.

Jon Collins: ...the Bible and what it was doing. So when He was deciding where he was going to go and hang out, was He like, "No, I want when this is recorded to make sure that it works with these design. So I'm going to go hang out on this mountain and be tempted. I'm going to go preach on this mountain"?

## Metaphor and Poetry

Tim Mackie: Yeah, totally. I think for the same reason that John the Baptist shows the Jordan River for all of the Joshua—

Jon Collins: It's an important symbolic place.

Tim Mackie: Again, it's all the way back to symbolic places, that doesn't mean they're not real. It's actually it's because real events happened at places that gives them their symbolic meaning.

Jon Collins: They become censored with their meaning.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, that's right. So yeah, Jesus would go to a tall hill to get—

Jon Collins: He knows what He's doing.

Tim Mackie: He knows exactly what he's doing.

Jon Collins: He's not just trying to get a better vantage point.

Tim Mackie: That's right. And then Matthew, by placing all those narratives at strategic points in the overall composition of Matthew, he's weaving it into larger design patterns. So another short example, I won't go on, but I'm in Philippians, Paul's letter to the Philippians, at the heartbeat, the theological heartbeat of that whole letter is a poem in Chapter 2.

And that poem is a retelling of Jesus as the Adam figure who doesn't give in to the test. He doesn't seize equality with God. Even though it's something He already has, He doesn't seize it for his own advantage. Rather He gives it up and then He becomes like the suffering servant.

So that's a good example where Paul has overlaid key images from the garden story, from the Israel story, from the David story, and from the suffering servant figure in Isaiah. He's overlaid all those images onto each other in this poem.

Jon Collins: It's remarkable.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, it's a remarkable poem. New Testament authors are constantly—



## Metaphor and Poetry

Jon Collins: It's all over.

Tim Mackie: It's all over. Bible's awesome.

Jon Collins: All right. Thank you for sending your questions in. Thank you, Tim.

Tim Mackie: Yeah. Oh, totally.

Jon Collins: That was really great.

Tim Mackie: Yeah, good stuff.

Jon Collins: I have more questions.

Tim Mackie: Of course. Of course, you do.

Jon Collins: There's more questions on this page, but for another time.

Tim Mackie: Deal.

Jon Collins: Thanks for listening to this episode by Project Podcast. This episode was edited and produced by Dan Gummel. We're crowdfunded nonprofit and we got tons of people supporting this project, and we're incredibly grateful and allows us to continue to make more resources and give them away for free. So thanks for listening and thanks for being a part of this with us.

Tim Mackie: Okay, go for it.

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