

Redemption E11 Transcript

Michelle: Hello, and welcome to BibleProject podcast. I'm your host today, Michelle Jones, back to wrap up our series on redemption. This is a new type of episode we've been trying out called a hyperlink episode. In every series, we attempt to isolate and study a biblical theme. But it's important to remember that biblical themes are woven together throughout the story of the Bible like a symphony. Today, in this hyperlink episode, we'll listen to clips from previous series' where the theme of redemption appears naturally in conversation. As we begin, let's remember that redemption is a transfer of a possession from being lost back into the possession of its rightful owner. Human beings belong to God and exist to live in union with God, but humans, tragically, are lost when taken possession by sin and death. The story of the Bible, then, is a story of how God will repossess humanity, that is, transfer us back to where we belong to restore us into union with him. In other words, God wants to redeem us. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Transition (1:20—1:31)]

Michelle: Our first clip is from our series on the Leviticus scroll back in July of 2022. At the very center of the scroll of Leviticus is a climactic ritual called the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur. On this day, the high priest casts lots for the fate of two innocent and blameless goats. One goat symbolically receives the sin of Israel and then is sent away to encounter a spiritual enemy in the wilderness named Azazel. The second goat is brought into God's holy place, the tabernacle, and the blood of this goat is sprinkled on the cover of the ark of the covenant, the throne of God himself. This is a strange image for us, but we need to remember that in the ancient world, the blood symbolizes life, and the life of something blameless can cover over the reality of death. While this series on redemption has focused on the Passover lamb, the Day of Atonement is another piece of the biblical mosaic that helps us understand the death and resurrection of Jesus. This conversation comes from the Leviticus Scroll series episode six titled: What is the Day of Atonement? Let's listen in.

[Part 1: Leviticus Scroll (2:47—30:10)]

Tim: Leviticus 16. This chapter is in the section that's at the center of the center of the center of the Torah.

Jon: Mhm. Yeah.

Tim: So we know we're close to the heartbeat of the message of the Torah when we enter into the tent on the Day of Atonement. This chapter is super, super important. So Aaron will take the two goats and present them before Yahweh at the tent of meeting, and he's going to get out dice. Usually, they're called casting lots, but it's rolling ancient dice. And the dice will determine the fate of these goats. One lot will assign the goat for Yahweh. The other lot will assign the goat for *Azazel*.

[Laughter]

Jon: Who's this?

Tim: *Azazel*. It's a wonderful question, Jon. So let me just show you Leviticus 16 verse eight. NIV translates the word *Azazel* as: "For the scapegoat." "One lot for Yahweh, the other lot for the scapegoat." Now even that English phrasing is a little bit odd. For the scapegoat?

Jon: Yeah. Instead of as the scapegoat?

Tim: Yeah. It makes you sound like this goat is being sent for some o—

Jon: On behalf of—

Tim: For some other thing—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Named the scapegoat. And actually, that oddity is the problem at the heart of NIV's interpretation here. Uhm, the New American Standard also translates as "scapegoat—" so does King James. But the ESV transliterates the word *Azazel* with a capital A.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “One lot for Yahweh, one lot for Azazel.”

Jon: Like it’s a name of something.

Tim: Yeah. And the NRSV does that as well. Why did they do that? Well so notice the parallelism of verse eight. It’s almost like a poetic line. “Aaron will cast lots for two goats. One lot for Yahweh, the other lot for Azazel.” So the sentence structure leads you to think that each lot will designate each goat for someone. And then—we’ll just keep reading. “Then, Aaron will offer the goat on which is the lot for Yahweh fell and make it a purification offering. And the goat on which the lot for Azazel fell shall be presented alive before Yahweh to make atonement for it to send it to Azazel into the wilderness.” So there is ample evidence that the earliest interpreters of Leviticus understood this as the name of a spiritual being. A Semitic scholar, Nicholas Wyatt, thinks it derives from two roots. One is the word *Azaz*, in Hebrew, which means “strong.” And the other one is *el*, which means spiritual being—powerful spiritual being who resides in the wilderness. So here’s the next thing that is interesting. The two goats are presented together as a singular offering. And there’s no other offering that’s quite like this.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So first, the goat that is for Yahweh—”He shall slaughter the goat of the purification offering. That’s for the people. And he will bring its blood inside the veil.”

Jon: Inside the holy place—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The holy of holies.

Tim: And this is it. This is, like, the time that he goes in once a year. “He will do with its blood as he did with the blood of a bull, he will sprinkle it right on the atonement lid on the mercy seat. And he shall make atonement for the holy place because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins. So he will do this for the tent of meeting that dwells in the middle of them in the middle of their impurities.”

Jon: All right. Two goats. One is going to be an atonement—

Tim: Purification offering.

Jon: Purification offering.

Tim: That’s right. Yeah.

Jon: And we know from that purification offering, the life blood's taken from the animal. And the animal gave its life even though it didn't deserve it because it didn't have blemish. So it's this idea of something—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Without the moral failings that you had—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Even though its blemishes weren't about moral failings.

[Laughter]

Tim: They were a symbol—

Jon: But—

Tim: Of them.

Jon: They were a symbol—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Of them—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Is dying on, on your behalf. The blood is drained out. The life is in the blood. That pow—there's some sort of life power still in that blood. The priest sprinkles it on objects and on the space. And, and it's, it's, it's still hard for me to wrap my mind around—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But it's this idea of our corruption, our moral failings, isn't just something that screws with me and my relationship with maybe God or with others. It actually screws up with the whole environment.

Tim: A vandalism—

Jon: A vandalism—

Tim: Or pollution.

Jon: Is the metaphor—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: You've been using.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And that the life blood is this ritual kind of cleansing to kind of clear the air, clean the slate—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But also because of the transgressions in regard to their sins.

Tim: Mhm. There's two reasons given here in Leviticus 16:16. "Making atonement," one, "because of the impurities of the sons of Israel." So this is like—this is the stuff that doesn't have to do with moral failings.

Jon: Hmm. Impurities just means like—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Being impure, what we just talked about.

Tim: Being ritually impure. And it's as if those ritual impurities of skin disease, and of touching dead bodies, and of leaking reproductive fluids—and these are all symbols, fluids and substances, that are associated with death or the loss of life. It's as if the tent in the middle of the camp is depicted as surrounded by a chaotic sea of encroaching death by dying people who—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Live around the tent.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And those are constantly breaking at the shore, as it were, and spattering up little bits of impurity over the tent curtains and, like, slowly vandalizing. So that's one image.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So that needs to be dealt with. And then the second reason given is: "Because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins."

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: Their moral impurities.

Jon: And that's also polluting?

Tim: Is also polluting.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And so the singular act of atonement—it's dealing with both. And this is—we're back to our conversation many episodes ago—the atonement is used in two ways. And, uh, the Hebrew Bible scholar here that I've learned the most from is Jay Sklar—uh, his book *Impurity, and Sin, and Atonement in Ancient Israel [Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement: The Priestly Conceptions]*. That's not the precise title, but we'll put a link in the show notes to his book. Is that atonement is used in two ways related to the two main meanings of its root word. One is to provide a ransom. W—when you wrong someone, you owe them. And so a—when we wrong each other, we wrong God. That's core to this idea. And so we owe God for wronging each other. And so a blameless life being offered unfairly, to give its life for my sins, is a ransom. But then also, uhm, another metaphorical kind of scheme is that my sins and impurities pollute the divine presence like that encroaching waves of ickiness. And so that blood can overpower the forces of death by standing in my place as a blameless substitute where life, a blameless life, can cover over death and sin. Both stories are being told right here in Leviticus 16:16. And this goat, which is only one half of the Day of Atonement offering, the one that goes into the holy place by the priest, does that.

Jon: The emphasis is on the pollution and the vandalism.

Tim: Yeah. I have to separate them to make sense of them. But the idea is our signs of mortality, our impurities, which are not morally wrong, but they are signs that we're dying —

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Creatures, and then also my moral failures—and death and moral failure link closely together in the biblical story because the only reason we're all outside of Eden is because of humanity's moral failings. And so the moral failings are compensated for, and the effects of our moral failings are reversed by the blood of the substitute put on the atonement lid, as if this lid, which is the place where God's presence touches down, is the place where God has provided the substitute. I'm not saying any of this makes deep, intuitive sense to me—

[Laughter]

Tim: But I'm saying it's a symbolic, ritual—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Language that I've had to work a long time—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: To learn what it's saying. But I think once you sympathetically can enter into the symbols, you can see, at least, the story.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So this one represents a blameless life. "Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord?" Psalm 15: "Only the blameless one who does what is right and just." So this animal unfairly dies for the sins of the non-blameless and carries in its life to cover over the effects of th—Israel's sins that have polluted the most holy place. That's the symbolism here.

Jon: All right.

Tim: What we also hear is nobody else should be in the tent when he brings in that goat —just one representative human and Yahweh. Okay. Down to verse 20. "So then he comes out. And when he finishes atoning for the holy place, and for the tent of meeting, and for the altar—"because he actually sprinkles blood on all those. This is cool. So where he goes is, he takes the blood of that goat and he goes into the most holy place, which is going to the most westward point. The door is always facing east toward the sunrise. So you go in through the door that brings you into the courtyard. You go past the altar. You go in the east door. So you're constantly going west.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But what happens is he takes the blood in and then he starts a journey from the western holy spot to go east.

Jon: To sprinkle the blood.

Tim: Yeah. And he's sprinkling at each key point on his eastward exile from the holy place. Adam and Eve are exiled at the east side of the garden.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Cain is exiled east of Eden. The Babylonians go east. So it's as if the high priest is following the eastward exile of humanity from the early chapters of Genesis, sprinkling blood at every exile along the way.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So then he comes out and he comes to that goat that's alive, and he puts the two hands and he presses them down on the head of that goat that's alive. And he confesses over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, all their transgressions, and all

their sins. “He will place them on the head of the goat.” Now there’s good symbolic language for you.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Put the sin on the goat?

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah. Somehow.

Tim: Somehow. Then what he does is send it into the wilderness: “By the hand of a man of my time—a man of the time—a man of appointing.”

Jon: Someone will send him up.

Tim: Mhm. “And that goat will carry upon itself the iniquities of Israel to a land that is cut off, and he will send the goat into the wilderness.”

Jon: The sins are exiled.

Tim: Yeah. So the holy of holies represents, like, the Eden, tree of life, center. And the one goat goes in there. The blameless goat goes in there. The living goat goes out into the wilderness to a cut-off land, the opposite end of the cosmos in the biblical imagination. And what’s interesting is *Azazel* is not brought up there.

Jon: Mhm. I’m noticing that.

Tim: Here it’s just called: “The realm of being cut-off in the wilderness—”

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Which is the opposite of the garden. So scholars call this the elimination ritual. And I, uh, learned a lot about this from reading lots of scholars. One particularly illuminating account for this ritual was a scholar named Roy Gane, in his book, *Cult and Character*. It’s a whole book about purification offerings in the Day of Atonement—

[Laughter]

Tim: And the problem of evil in the Hebrew Bible. So I'm, I'm just going to talk through this kind of extended quote, but this was hugely illuminating for me. And he says: "No part of this goat, the living goat, is offered to Yahweh. This is not a sacrifice."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: "It's an elimination ritual. The biblical prescription does not call for the death of this goat. It is simply sent away as a ritual garbage truck—"

[Laughter]

Tim: "Carrying controlled, toxic waste to *Azazel*. Now, *Azazel*'s precise nature is elusive."

[Laughter]

Tim: "The reason for the lot ritual before Yahweh is that he must decide the role of the goats through what appears to be chance. Through the lot ceremonies the goats are designated as belonging to Yahweh and to *Azazel* respectively, each being a party capable of ownership. The fact that Yahweh is a supernatural being could be taken to imply that *Azazel* is the same. But the animal is not an offering to *Azazel*. Rather, the live goat transports Israelite failures to *Azazel* who ends up having to take this noxious load."

[Laughter]

Tim: "The ritual is an unfriendly gesture to *Azazel*."

Jon: Oh.

Tim: "It's more like sending someone a load of chemical or nuclear waste—"

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Because it’s Yahweh who commands the priest to perform the ritual, it appears that *Azazel* is his enemy. It’s likely, therefore, that *Azazel* is some kind of spiritual being, that his presence in the desert regions is the extreme opposite of God’s holy presence in the holy of holies. However, the nature of *Azazel*’s personality is not revealed in Leviticus likely to avoid the danger that some might be tempted to honor him.” This is the snake. It’s a name for the snake. And so that evil one is the architect behind why we’re all outside of Eden. So once a year, we send him a load of B.S. in a paper bag on fire.

[Laughter]

Tim: Right? And we send—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It out like—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Send it back where it came from.

Jon: And ring the doorbell.

Tim: It’s the elimination ritual. It’s so illuminating.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And both goats together, remember, are a singular purification offering.

Jon: How do you get that both goats are a singular—

Tim: When he said—

Jon: Pur—

Tim: Back when he said: “Take two special goats—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “For a,” singular, “purification offering.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So one is the blameless one who goes in and gives its life for sinful people. And its blameless life ransoms them from death and also purifies the pollution of their iniquities. And then the other goat represents Yahweh's desire to do away with the effects of sin and evil once and for all by sending the load of waste back to the one who brought it into the world in the first place. This is the core of the Day of Atonement. It's remarkable.

Jon: Yeah. So Jesus is talked about in terms of being an atoning sacrifice.

Tim: Hmm. He, he talked about his own coming death as an atoning sacrifice. Yes. What's interesting about Jesus is he is bringing together all of the mosaic tiles of depicting God's victory over the evil one and his dealing with the consequences of human sin. And he's merged them all together. So important passages here for Jesus are, like, Mark 10:45 where after two disciples come and say: "Hey, Jesus, uhm, you know, when you're enthroned as the king of the universe, could, like, we sit at your right and left hands?"

[Laughter]

Tim: And Jesus says: "You, you have no idea what you're asking for. Are you going to be able to be baptized—go through the waters that I'm going to have to go through?"

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: That's suggestive of—

Jon: Purification.

Tim: Purification. Yep. "You know, the, the kings of our world," he says, "love to become lords over people. They love to have authority."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "But nah, here in this crew, the one who is great becomes the servant. Whoever wants to be first, must become the servant of all, for even the son of Adam, son of humanity, didn't come to be served, but to become a servant, and to give his life as a *lutron*, ransom, for many."

Jon: Atonement?

Tim: Yeah. A sacrificed atonement that ransoms someone from death. Yeah.

Jon: The word atonement is not used.

Tim: No, it's the word redemption. Yeah, it's to purchase someone from a state of slavery leading unto death. Yep. But the point is, here, he is activating the Son of— Daniel seven, the Son of Man—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: He's activating the suffering servant of Isaiah—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: With this language. And he's activating the Exodus narrative of redemption from death through the death of the Passover lamb. That's Mark 10:45. Other key passages—I'll just—I could go to any of the Last Supper narratives, but Jesus chooses Passover. I'll go to Luke 22's account of the Last Supper. But Jesus chooses the weekend of Passover to time his showdown with the powers in Jerusalem. In Luke's account, he says: "'I've desired to eat this Passover with you before I come.' When he takes the bread, he says: 'This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, he took the cup, and he said: 'This cup, which is poured out for y'all, is the new covenant in my blood.'"

Jon: Poured out versus sprinkled. That's interesting.

Tim: Yeah. Because remember, the blood would get taken from an animal, a purification offering—it would get taken into the holy of holies, then sprinkled in the holy place, and sprinkled on the altar. And then th—what's left in the bowl gets poured out at the base of the altar.

Jon: Ah, okay.

Tim: Yeah. So here Jesus is merging together imagery from the purification offerings happening in the tabernacle.

Jon: The cup.

Tim: And the purification offerings that happen throughout the year culminate in this one great purification that is the Day of Atonement.

Jon: The Day of Atonement.

Tim: But he's doing this—

Jon: On Passover.

Tim: On Passover—

Jon: Which is a different type of substitute.

Tim: A different narrative, but both had to do with the sins of Israel and the sins of the empires of this world—lead to slavery, and evil, and death. And so Yahweh is going to bring a great flood of justice over the land. But for anyone who wants to be covered by God's mercy, he provides a blameless substitute. That's the Passover lamb. But that's also, essentially, what the Day of Atonement is about. He's brought Israel out into the wilderness, a land of danger and death. And he's provided a way for them to be washed of their sins and impurities. But man, if they don't deal with them, they're going to pollute Yahweh's presence and he'll leave, which will leave them to die in the wilderness. And so the Day of Atonement goats become another way of looking into the mystery of what Passover is. The Hebrew Bible is a huge mosaic. So all these narratives, and here, ritual symbols, help us become wise about what's wrong with us—

[Laughter]

Tim: And what's wrong with the world and what is God doing about it. What has God done about it? And Jesus, just in a very few little words, brings all of these narrative images together in a really provocative way. And the Last Supper is an important place for that.

Jon: What Christians like to say is that the sacrifices we're pointing to or trying to enact what Jesus actually accomplished.

Tim: Yeah. Yep. That's right.

Jon: That he's actually doing something that all of the symbolism was the hope and power of.

Tim: Yeah. So here, an important distinction needs to be made between the actual historical activities happening in and around the tent and the tabernacle and the Hebrew Bible's re-presentation of all of that. Because the Hebrew Bible gives us a literary representation of the Day of Atonement and of Passover, but included within a collection of scrolls that have all of these other stories in it. And one scroll in the Hebrew Bible is Isaiah, which tells you—Israel and humanity really needs is a person who will ascend to the high place and offer their life as a blameless sacrifice. In, in other words, Leviticus is alongside Isaiah is alongside Genesis. So when the author of Hebrews says it's impossible for the blood of animals to take away sins, he's not saying something new. What he's saying is what is already the message of the Hebrew Bible, because the Hebrew Bible is telling you that the animal sacrifices are just a symbolic gift of Yahweh of a down payment of something bigger that needs to happen, which is of a blameless

human who would come and stand in the holy place and offer their life. And that's what Moses' story is about. Does that make sense?

Jon: Mhm. So Jesus saw himself as the, the blameless goat—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Whose blood is purifying.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Now there's a goat who bears the sins—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And is cast out. Does Jesus identify with that goat?

Tim: Uhm, it seems like the gospel authors want to associate Jesus with both goats, one by being the blameless sufferer. But then there's the emphasis that Jesus' death is happening outside the city near a burial plot grave area outside the city gate.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And so the one place in the New Testament this is really exploited is in the letter to the Hebrews where he says: "Therefore, Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside the gate. So let us go out to him outside the camp, bearing his shame." The purification offering animals, their remains were taken outside the camp to a dumping site. So it could be that he's referring to that. He could also be referring to the goat that is exiled outside of the camp as well.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: You go join him.

Jon: Well because there's First Peter two—

Tim: Hmm. Mhm. Oh, yeah.

Jon: "Jesus himself bore our sins in his body."

Tim: Yep.

Jon: That makes me think of, like, the ordination of the scapegoat—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: With, like, taking the sins.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Of bearing the sins—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: You're saying. Yep. Yeah. What, what verse is that?

Jon: Uh—

Tim: Two—

Jon: 24.

Tim: There it is. Yeah. Two verse 24. Yeah. He links Jesus to a sacrificial animal that carries our sins. And there's only one animal that's said to carry the sins of Israel. And that's the goat for *Azazel*.

Jon: Yeah. The scapegoat.

Tim: Yeah. So that—that's a good example. That little line comes from Leviticus 16, but he's refracted that language through the way that's all summarized in Isaiah 53, which he's also quoting from right here and then in the next line, where he says—

Jon: Oh: "By his wounds you've been healed."

Tim: "By his wounds we've been healed." So he's reading the Day of Atonement through the poem about the suffering servant. That's what we're seeing. Peter's mind is so saturated that he thinks about the Day of Atonement through the prism—

[Laughter]

Tim: Uh, through the looking glass of Isaiah 53. He sees them as deeply connected.

Jon: Where did Isaiah get the idea that the suffering servant would—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Bear the sins?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. I think from the Day of Atonement and from the narratives about Moses giving his life for the sins of the people and, and so on. So, yeah, this is the chapter that resolves the crisis at the center of the center of the center of the, of the Torah.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And the fact that it needs to happen every year also tells us that it's like a stopgap. This is not new creation.

Jon: This doesn't settle it.

Tim: We haven't restored humanity back to Eden.

Jon: We're still enacting something.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. What God has given is a way for Torah, instruction, and a way for his people to understand who they are, what they need, what God wants to give them. This is what the ritual instructions of Leviticus are all about.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Also, as a concluding note, when we were talking about the offerings before, you showed there was a sentence where God says—

Tim: "I have given them to you."

Jon: "I'm giving them to you."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: This isn't like an obligation we owe to God to try to appease him, but was a gift that God was giving—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: To us—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: To know we can be in a right standing and to embrace this right standing.

Tim: Yeah. It's actually in the chapter right after the Day of Atonement.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: It's in Leviticus 17 where God says: "The life of flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for yourselves." It's God presented as the initiator and the giver of the blameless life that will ransom from death and purify from the effects of sin.

Jon: God is giving the life of the blood to us.

Tim: Yeah. A life of a blameless one.

Jon: Of a blameless one—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: As a gift.

Tim: Yep. That is clearly how Jesus saw it, which is why he presented himself as the gift of God—

[Laughter]

Tim: As God's gift to a failed Israel and a failed humanity. Which is I think why, you know, the Apostles, and the Apostle John among them, of whoever penned the letters of John—and whichever Apostle you think it is, the one who abandoned him in Gethsemane or the one, John the elder, who stuck around with Jesus' mom by the cross. But either way, John's takeaway from having seen Jesus die is the most simple, profound statement in the New Testament: "God is love."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: "And he demonstrated his love for us in this, while we were—"well, actually, I'm merging it now with Romans five—

[Laughter]

Tim: "While we were still sinner, uh, the Messiah died for us." God is—the atonement is a revelation of the love of God for Jesus and for the Apostles. And I think here in Leviticus too, it just takes a little more work for us to get there.

[Musical Break 30:04—30:10)]

[Part 2: How to Read the Bible (30:10—39:31)]

Michelle: That clip was from our 2022 Leviticus Scroll series, episode six, titled: What is the Day of Atonement? You can listen to the entire nine-part series to dive deeper into the structure and themes of the book of Leviticus. Now, let's add another theme to the mix. In a long series about how to read the Bible, Tim and Jon spend six episodes talking about how biblical poetry works. Thirty percent of the Bible is poetry, full of metaphoric language. Metaphor is our fundamental way of perceiving the world. We create understanding by comparing familiar experiences with new ideas. And every culture has its own way of developing metaphoric language. We say things like: "Do you have time?" Or: "I'm out of time." Or: "Can I buy some more time?" These are all phrases that show that we think of time as a possession. This clip is from the question and response episodes, that conclude the discussion on biblical poetry. Does Paul think of time as a possession that needs to be purchased? Let's listen in.

Chris: Hi Tim and Jon. 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.

Tim: Yeah. That's good. Th—I—this was actually a little detail in our conversation about metaphor schemes—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Time as a possession.

Jon: Yeah. How much had you thought about that before you mentioned it in—

Tim: Oh, like—

Tim: In the podcast?

Tim: Hard—like not at all.

Jon: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Jon: It seemed like kind of just a—

Tim: Yeah, it was a, it was a kind of one-off.

Jon: Afterthought, kind of thing.

Tim: So, however, though, I do think biblical authors' 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: We use it so much.

Tim: We use it so much. "I lost time."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "Spare some time."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "Give some time. Gain some time."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "Buy some time."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And the biblical authors don't use that kind of vocabulary. However, Chris, you identified two interesting texts. One, right, in Psalm 31: "My times are in your hand," David says to God.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And then in Ephesians chapter five, yeah, Paul talks about redeeming the time. So I did—I went and looked both those up, and though—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."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: "My time belongs to God."

Jon: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: So time isn't my possession—

Jon: It's God's possession.

Tim: It's something God has and that he providentially, you know, orchestrates and, and car—

Jon: So you could use—so you could say: "I'm saving time for God."

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah, yeah.

Jon: Right. "I'm saving God's time."

Tim: Yeah.

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

Tim: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: Totally. And even in Ephesians chapter five, time—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 promised land.

Jon: So time is—the metaphor is that time is—

Tim: In slavery to evil.

Jon: In slavery to evil.

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

Jon: Time is—time—

Tim: Like is—

Jon: Is a captive.

Tim: And we, in—

Jon: Oh, that's cool.

Tim: The power of—

Jon: That's interesting.

Tim: The new human, Jesus, are able to free time from its slavery to evil and release it into the new creation.

Jon: So that's a great example of—

Tim: And what a cool metaphor.

Jon: It is a cool metaphor—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Like—so the common Western metaphor is: time is a possession.

Tim: Hmm.

Jon: And—

Tim: Yeah, time's my possession.

Jon: Time is my possession.

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

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Right. And that's actually how I would typically read that verse.

Tim: Yep.

Jon: "Redeem the time. Okay."

Tim: Yep.

Jon: "Maximize my time."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "I'm not going to sleep in. I'm not going to—"

Tim: Yeah, yeah.

Jon: Whatever. But, uhm—which isn't—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Necessarily a—completely off the mark.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But—

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: You're saying the metaphor that the Bible's drawing upon is that—

Tim: That Paul is using—when you look at his use of the word redeem—

Jon: Yeah. The metaphoric scheme in his head—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Is: "Time is a captive."

Tim: "Time—"it—it's an Exodus scheme. Yeah. Let's see.

Jon: Time is in slavery.

Tim: Yeah. Th—actually, it's bigger than that. It's just: the world is in slavery—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: To evil and selfishness.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And time is one example that can generate many different types of—people are enslaved to evil.

Jon: Well—

Tim: A—and here it's—

Jon: When he says time, is he referring to, like, you know, the age?

Tim: Yes.

Jon: H—how he—

Tim: Yeah. Exactly.

Jon: Talk about the age of sin and death—

Tim: That's right.

Jon: The age of—yeah.

Tim: Yeah. That's right.

Jon: So we're in an age that is captive.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: And we can rescue—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The age.

Tim: We can be a part of redeeming the time, freeing it from slavery.

Jon: But redeeming time seems kind of trite. Like: "Oh, I'm going to save an hour." But rescuing an—

Tim: Oh.

Jon: Age?

Tim: Yeah. That's right. To re—

Jon: That sounds epic.

[Laughter]

Tim: Total—

Jon: Right?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, a—again, ou—sor—o—our English word "redeem" has become bland from its biblical meaning. So think purchase or rescue.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And purchase in terms of: purchase something that's enslaved—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So that you can free it.

Jon: But he's not talking about, like, you know: "Organize your calendar better." That's not Paul's point here.

Tim: No. Oh, no, totally not.

Jon: His point is, like, that we live in an era—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: That is—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Enslaved—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: To evil.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And we can be a part of—

Tim: Yeah. Here I—

Jon: Rescuing—

Tim: Totally.

Jon: This era.

Tim: Yeah. And actually, it's the crowning—

Jon: It's like a battle cry.

Tim: It's a crowning statement of a whole series of metaphors in Ephesians five where he talks about: "You were formerly dark, but now you are light in the Lord." So that's Genesis one.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And then he talks about the fruit—

Jon: Which is a metaphor.

Tim: Of the light. So all of a sudden the light grows fruit.

[Laughter]

Jon: This is like a mixing metaphors now.

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

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And then he says: “Don’t participate in the unfruitful actions of the dark, rather, shine light on them.”

[Laughter]

Jon: Wow. So light, light is this type of—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Tree that grows fruit.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Dark is this kind of thing that grows unfruit.

Tim: Mhm.

[Laughter]

Jon: Whatever that is.

Tim: Yeah. Totally. And then he says: “For this reason, it says—”he quotes a, a hymn that they sang in the church: “Wake up, oh sleeper, rise 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: This is al—so saturated in metaphors.

Tim: Yeah. 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.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This is the whole point we were making, is the early biblical narratives, especially Genesis, are the seedbed of the entire biblical metaphorical imagination. Light, dark—right? Death, life, fruit—this is all Genesis one through three imagery. So when he f—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. So you’re participating in the redemption of creation. So he’s not talking about—yeah: “Get more efficient with your calendar.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He's talking about—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Loving your neighbor as yourself—

Jon: Right.

Tim: And loving God to—

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

Tim: Yeah. Living as if you're, uh, in the new garden of Eden—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Even though we're in the in-between time.

Jon: Beautiful.

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

Jon: Thanks, Chris.

[Musical Break (38:10—38:12)]

[Part 3: Nefesh (39:31 —50:25)]

Michelle: That clip was from our 2018 series on How to Read Biblical Poetry, specifically, the Poetry Question and Response episode. Now, let's move to our third and final clip. In our series on redemption, we talked about God redeeming humanity from the realm of sin and death and bringing humanity into the realm of God's own life. But this raises an interesting question. What happens to us between the time we die and when God raises us to new life? In 2017, Jon and Tim did a series on the Hebrew word *nefesh*, which in English gets translated as "soul." In Hebrew thought, our *nefesh* simply means "physical life," or the fact that we are a living being. When characters in

the Bible talk about their *nefesh*, they typically mean their embodied existence that is sustained by God's own life. And while the biblical authors believe that your life, or your existence, can persist after your body is in the grave, there's a little discussion on what that type of life is. In this clip, Jon and Tim discuss what happens to our *nefesh* after we die. Can God redeem our *nefesh* from the grave? Here's Tim and Jon.

Tim: So the reason why the, the biblical authors have a category for a you that survives after death, after your body gives out—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: It has to do with their deep conviction that God made this world good, that he loves it, and that he's committed to it. And he's committed to rescuing it so that it can be what he always meant it to be. And if that's the case—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Then within this biblical, right, Hebrew mindset, death cannot be the end of me.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: What the biblical authors refuse to speculate about is: "What is the me?" What is the state and experience of the me after I die? And we've had these conversations before.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: It's just, there's very—there's virtually—

Jon: It's pretty vague.

Tim: No information.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. "The grave" or "being with the Lord."

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And so here we go. Here's one of just—it's a, it's a great example in the Old Testament, where the poet of Psalm 16 is talking about how God is committed to him. It's connected to David, the hope of the Davidic king—how God's committed to him. And he says—uh, Psalm 16 verse eight: "I've set the Lord continually before me. Because he's at my right hand, I won't be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad. My glory rejoices. My flesh dwells securely. You won't abandon my *nefesh* to the grave or allow your holy one to see the pit. You'll make known to me the path of life." So here's a sense of: "You won't abandon my *nefesh* to the grave. So when I die—"

Jon: Isn't my body going to—

Tim: My—

Jon: Go to the grave?

Tim: Yeah. So in that sense, my *nefesh*, my physical existence, is, but there's another sense in which, that can't be the end of the story if this God is who this God says he is. He's committed to redeeming his world and his people. And so here's a use of *nefesh* that does seem to be the you that isn't tied to your current mortal body—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: But is connected to the you that will be the immortal, physical you. "You've made known to me the path of life." There'll be a way through death to a physical existence on the other side. So this is not talking about afterlife. This is talking about: "When this *nefesh*—when this prototype of my *nefesh* gives out—"

[Laughter]

Tim: "The next version will be what you usher me into." A—n—so it's very important. This is not talking about the afterlife. Even in this use, we're not talking about an immortal, eternal soul. It's talking about: "My *nefesh* will take new form." So I mean, there—he's going to die. But in another sense, he's able to say: "You're not going to let my *nefesh* die."

Jon: How do you know he's going to die? He knows he's going to die?

Tim: Well, I think there's a sense of—I mean, it's just being human. You're going to die.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The last line of the poem is: "In your presence is fullness of joy, in your right hand are pleasures forever." It seems like what the poet's straining at here, is that if God is truly committed to me and to this world, in this case, to the line of David, then death can't be the end. There has to be a form of life—eternal life, physical existence, that God still has in store.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: There's a similar sentiment in a conclusion of, uh, Psalm 73. There's just not that many, but that's the basic idea.

Jon: Hmm. There's this verse where it says: "You will redeem my life from the grave."

Tim: Ah. Uh-huh.

Jon: I think it's like: "You will redeem my life from the grave. You will surely take me to yourself."

Tim: Ah.

Jon: Here it is, yeah.

Tim: Psalm 49.

Jon: Psalm 49.

Tim: Yeah. "As for the wicked, death will be their shepherd. But God will redeem my *nefesh*. He'll redeem my *nefesh* from the grave, for he will take me." That's what it says.

Jon: Hmm. "He will take me."

Tim: Mhm. So what does it mean for God to redeem—rescue—

Jon: A body from the dead?

Tim: A soul from the grave? And again, we think: "Yeah, into the, the pearly—through the pearly gates—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Or something.

Jon: "To eternal bliss."

Tim: Yeah. So think—

Jon: "I'm going home."

Tim: So redeem is a—is vocabulary from the Exodus story—in rescue.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So what does it mean to be rescued from the power of death? It doesn't mean that you—I'm trying to think. If you use the Exodus as an image—if you're a—enslaved in Egypt—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: You're saved out of slavery—

Jon: Mhm, when your status changes.

Tim: And your status changes, and you go into the promised land.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So here it's: you're redeemed from having to die, and then your status changes so that you—

Jon: Can be alive.

Tim: Can be alive.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Uhm—

Jon: So there's a resurrection hope here.

Tim: S—c—orrect. That's where these are—these are the bedrock, or to use a different metaphor, the seed—seedbed.

Jon: Right.

Tim: And I'm not making this up. The Apostle Peter thought so too. This is the top of page eight. Uhm, Psalm 16 is—was really important for the early Christians and how—help them find language about Jesus. This is right after Peter is giving a message, and he quotes the section of Psalm 16 that we just read. And here's his commentary. He says: "Fellow Israelites, I tell you confidently, the patriarch David died. He was buried. His tomb's with us to this day. But he was a prophet, and he knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his seed, descendants, on the throne. Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, name—"and then he quotes from the Psalm: "That he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God raised this Jesus to life, and we're all witnesses."

Jon: So Peter looked at this hope that he saw in the Psalms of resurrection, and he said —

Tim: He saw res—

Jon: Look, that's what happened—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: With Jesus.

Tim: This, this poem wasn't talking about the afterlife. This poem was talking about the hope of God rescuing someone into new physical existence. And—

Jon: It's not afterlife, it's more life.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah. Totally. Yeah. Or what scholar N.T. Wright—he has a clever phrase—his fat book on the resurrection. He called it “life after life after death.”

[Laughter]

Jon: Wh—

Tim: So—

Jon: Life—

Tim: So in other words—

Jon: After—

Tim: Life after death.

Jon: Life after death.

Tim: Resurrection life after life after death.

[Laughter]

Jon: I’m so confused.

Tim: Well, because i—because by definition, if I die, if my body—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Gives out—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: The hope and the trust is that what happened to Jesus will happen to me.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But, uh, most likely, there’s going to be a time gap.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like there has been for many followers of Jesus. So where are those people?

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: What's—

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: There's—

Jon: Life after life after death.

Tim: What's the—what is the afterlife existence of those?

Jon: And it's very—it—we have no—

Tim: In the—

Jon: Idea.

Tim: It's described—

Jon: It's very, very obscure.

Tim: Here we go. In the Old Testament—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I—it's just there's no—nothing.

Jon: "He will take me."

Tim: Yeah. And then—

[Laughter]

Tim: What we know is that death won't be the end.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: "You've redeemed me from the power of the grave." And then—

Jon: And so if that's afterlife—if that's life after death—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Then what the resurrection—

Tim: Then the—

Jon: Is, is really the life after that.

Tim: Life after death. Yeah.

Jon: The life after the life—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: After death.

Tim: And then Paul—

[Laughter]

Tim: Right in those handful of passages too—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: And then once with Jesus, right, to the, the guy next to him on the cross—“Today, you’ll be with me in paradise.”

Jon: Yeah. That’s—

Tim: Or—

Jon: The afterlife.

Tim: “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” So that—that’s—life after death, according to the New Testament, is to be with Jesus.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: With—

Jon: And so we’re all obsessed with: “What is life after death?”

Tim: That’s right.

Jon: And N.T. Wright’s clever turn of phrase is to say: “We should be more obsessed with the life that comes after—”

Tim: Well—

Jon: “The life after death.”

Tim: Well, and th—what the biblical authors are actually talking about—

Jon: Is the life—

Tim: And describe is—

Jon: That comes after that afterlife—

Tim: Life after life after death.

[Laughter]

Tim: Come on. That's clever.

Jon: Y—ye—it is clever.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So we should stop talking about the afterlife. We should start talking about the life after.

Tim: Yeah. That's right.

Jon: There's life after life.

Tim: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: That's right. Life after—yeah.

[Musical Break (47:52—47:55)]

Michelle: That was from our 2017 *Nefesh* Soul series, episode three, titled, What Happens After We Die? Check out our podcast archives to listen to the entire series. Well, that's it for today's episode. I hope you enjoyed listening to this hyperlink edition of Redemption. You can find links for the full episodes we sampled in the show notes. Keep an eye out for an upcoming theme video on redemption, along with a collection of resources for deeper study. You can find everything on our app or at BibleProject.com.

I'm Michelle Jones, and there's a whole team of people working to bring this podcast to life every week. For a full list of who's involved, check out the show credits on the episode description. BibleProject is a crowdfunded project. We exist to help people experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. Everything we make is free because of the generous support of thousands of people just like you. Thanks for being a part of this with us.

Zach: Hey, my name is Zach Temes, and I'm from Bourbonnais, Illinois.

Janie: Hi, my name is Janie, and I'm from Sisters, Oregon. I first heard about BibleProject when I was in seminary years ago.

Zach: I first heard about the BibleProject from my dad. I get to work with college students experiencing Scripture for the first time in their life in a real way, and I get to point out the BibleProject is a great resource for them as they begin to understand the story of their life as part of a Kingdom narrative.

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