

Resurrection as a Way of Life: Part Five

Speaker: Tim Mackie

[EMSB theme fades in]

Hey everybody, I'm Tim Mackie, and this is my podcast, "Exploring My Strange Bible." I am a card-carrying Bible history and language nerd who thinks that Jesus of Nazareth is utterly amazing and worth following with everything that you have. On this podcast, I'm putting together the last twenty years' worth of lectures and sermons, where I've been exploring the strange and wonderful story of the Bible and how it invites us into the mission of Jesus and the journey of faith. And I hope this can all be helpful for you, too. I also helped start this thing called BibleProject. We make animated videos and podcasts and classes about all kinds of topics in Bible and theology. You can find all those resources at bibleproject.com. With all that said, let's dive into the episode for this week.

[EMSB theme fades out]

All right, well, this is the fifth episode of a five-part series we've been doing on the podcast called "Resurrection as a Way of Life." We've been exploring the importance and key role of the hope of new creation and resurrection in the mind and heart of a follower of Jesus. And in this teaching, we're going to explore the final pages of the Bible: the depiction of "new creation" in the Book of Revelation, and how crucial it is to understand the way that the Bible talks about this new universe as "new."

Because it both means that it has profound discontinuities—ways that the new creation will be *unlike* our current way of experiencing the world—but, at the same time, the way that the final pages of the Bible describe the "new creation" shows there's also lots of continuity. In other words, there's lots of ways that the new creation will be *similar* to the world, as we know it. It's both similar and dissimilar—and what does that mean? And why is that even important? If the question has never occurred to you why that's an important thing to think about, I'm going to hopefully convince you that it's a really, really important thing to think about: how the new creation is both different and similar to our current world. So there you go. That's the question we're going to ask as we open the last pages of the Bible. Let's dive in.

[Musical break (02:20–02:27)]

Today, it's fitting that we should turn to the second-to-last page of the Bible, to allow the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus to truly expand out into the glorious Christian hope of a universe raised from the dead, of a resurrected world. And that's exactly what John's talking about here. [Tim refers to visual] So I'll just put the big passage up here on the screen, but most of you have it open in front of you, or turned on in front of you, whichever.

And this is a glorious, glorious passage of Scripture—it comes right near the end of the story—and it's a “vision” from the Revelation. So let's just stop right there. This is from the book of the Revelation—not *Revelations*, with an “s” on the end. It's the most common mispronunciation of the book: the Revelation.

And you know, I was a little nervous in picking a passage to teach on, in this series, from the Revelation, because here's what I found about this book in modern audiences, at least in the West. Much like, as I often say, “cilantro divides a room in half”—[Tim laughs] half *love*, half *hate*; half are repulsed by it—the book of Revelation has much of the same effect on modern readers.

Either some people love it and are obsessed with it. And often—not always—but often it's connected to an upbringing, or a background, in church traditions that are really into prophecy, timelines, and end times, timetables, and this kind of thing—when—predicting Jesus's return and all that. So some people love it and find it endlessly fascinating for that. And it's precisely that group of people that makes the other half of the room totally weirded-out and repulsed by the book of Revelation. [Tim laughs] And they're just like, “I just want to love and follow Jesus—I don't know—it'll all pan out in the end,” kind of thing.

So that's about the effect that this book has on modern readers. And it's understandable. It seems like a bizarre book to most modern readers. And eventually, you might get accustomed to it, but it's a highly image-driven book, full of imagery that is just fantastic and outstanding. And the author, John, has all of these visions that he's writing down. It seems bizarre to modern readers—it was not bizarre to the first followers of Jesus, who were all Jewish.

The book of Revelation is a perfect example of a kind of literature that was very popular at the time of Jesus—called “the period of the second temple” or Second Temple Judaism. Bible nerds today call it “Jewish apocalyptic literature.” But the book of Revelation is not the only book of its kind from this time period. There are many other Jewish apocalypses that recounted dreams or visions that prophets had.

And what these dreams, or visions, do is they give the prophet or the visionary a chance to zoom up to, like, 30,000 feet, so to speak—over history and current events—and to offer God's point of view on the meaning of history and the meaning of events and what's gone wrong and where it's all going.

And the primary way that all of these—book of Revelation, but other Jewish apocalyptic texts—I could give you a whole list of them—you can go buy translations of them down at Powell's, and you will be better off for it because they're fascinating to read—but the way that all of these texts communicate is through heavy, intense imagery.

The best analogy that I can find—it's not perfect, but it's a good one—and, our own way of thinking about media and communication today is cartoons and, specifically, political cartoons. Work with me here—you guys ready?—just work with me here. You'll see two appear on the screen.

Each one of them is lampooning the main presidential candidate. Got to play fair, right? So there you go. Hillary is getting made fun of, and so is Donald, right there. So let's play fair. Okay, so here's two recent political cartoons. Now, if you're an American citizen, if you—even just, if you're not an American citizen—if you've been in American culture for, say, five years, do you need me to explain these cartoons to you? You get it, don't you?

[With grin in his voice] The one on the upper left is brilliant, isn't it? Come now, all right? Whether or not you agree with it, let's just "get" this as a very creative, thoughtful artist—[Tim laughs] you know what I'm saying?—in a million ways. And the one on the lower right, if you're an Indy race car fan, it's also brilliant, and it's in its own right. Do you need me to explain this to you? I don't think you do.

So just think, let's say someone from Jesus's day—a Jewish person who's living in ancient Rome—were to time travel—right?—and come sit next to you, right now, and be looking at these images, would it make perfect sense to them? No, of course not. What do you think they would start asking about?

Why is there a man in a dark, like, costume, wearing a cape? And what's that—blonde bangs protruding from there? And why is there an elephant hanging from a spaceship weather vane—right?—in the cloud city of Besspin? It's like—[Tim laughs] what's happening here? Like, what's that about? Right?

And why is there—what's that automobile? And why is it crashed before the finish line? And Indy race cars? And why is there a donkey pushing it? Like, what? These are not self-explanatory. You actually have to have a very sophisticated knowledge of American history, of American political symbolism and imagery. You also have to have a background in American sports, race car sports. You have to be well-versed in a whole

imaginary universe—[Tim laughs] right?—known as Star Wars. And do I have to teach you any of these? No, you're just—you get it. You get it.

So these are images and symbols that refer to *real* people and *real* things in history, but also laid on top of them is a layer of symbols and images from *other* real things or imaginary worlds, and it all swirls together into these really complex drawings that didn't require you to have an explanation—but an ancient reader would.

And I would suggest to you that when we come to the Book of Revelation, it's exactly the same thing, just the seats are swapped. You and I have become time travelers to ancient Israel-Palestine. And we are being invited into the highly image-driven dreams and visions of John, that he—you know, like your dreams are weird and fantastic, by the way—but also, that John clearly had these experiences, and then he *prayerfully* meditated over them and represented them in this form of literature that was common in John's day.

And just like these assume that you have a knowledge in Indy car racing and Star Wars, John's apocalypse assumes that you are immersed in the world of the Hebrew Scriptures, and in the world of first-century Roman-Israeli politics. That's what John assumes that you know, and that's why we find it all so bizarre.

And so, like, lesson number one—we're going to move on real quick here—but, just, lesson number one—and this is for free: the book of Revelation seems weird to you, primarily because we don't live in his time and place from 2,000 years ago. That's why it repulses half the room and fascinates the other half of the room.

And so what we always have to do is: first, ask—first, humble ourselves—and then, second, ask: what is the thing that he's alluding to, and what thing is he picking up from the Old Testament Scriptures or from his culture, and adapting and doing something brilliant with, to communicate?

And the way that John has pulled from the Old Testament and then mixed it together with his vision of the empty tomb and the resurrection, and what that means for following him and the future of the universe—brilliant. A thing of brilliance—the book of Revelation—is what I'm telling you. It's a work of literary *ninja*-ry. [Tim laughs] It's really amazing and brilliant.

Let me just show you one example. [Tim referencing visuals] And it's from the paragraph—let's go back to the paragraph here—oops, go back. So first line, and this will get us right into the resurrection and how the book of Revelation works.

So when you heard or read the first lines—a great paragraph right here—from Revelation 21, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth passed away. There was no longer any sea.” Now, even if you're not an expert in

the Old Testament Scriptures, my hunch is that some page of the Old Testament came into your mind—and what page would you be . . . ? There was a spoiler alert and, kind of—[Tim laughs]—went on the screen already. What page—what page of the Old Testament? Page one. Page one. He's deliberately echoing the opening words of the whole Bible, from Genesis, chapter 1.

Pay attention: “A new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and first earth passed away.” And what's no more? “The sea.” Now Christian surfers around the world are very depressed when they read this line, right? They're like, really? I was actually hoping I could do quite a lot of that in the new creation. But you'll see, I actually do think there's still hope once you get the *meaning* of John's image.

Okay, so let's go back to where he's quoting from. You'll see what he's doing here. So he's quoting from the opening lines of the Bible, “In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth.” When you see “the heavens,” don't think “city in the sky.” The heavens is the normal Hebrew way of referring to “the clouds”—like, “what's up there,” in the sky.

And when you see “the earth,” don't think “globe,” right? Hebrews had no concept of the globe. [Tim says with a grin] It wasn't until, like, seventy years ago that you and I had a picture of this globe to look at, for goodness sakes—there's no way that's what was in their head. What's in their head is: if “heavens” refers to “what's up there,” what does “earth” refer to? It's just “what's down here.” It's just, like—it's a normal language, based on normal observations that you and I would make just standing right here: the heavens and the earth.

Now, let's talk about what is the current state—the uncreated state—of things in the beginning that God is working with. How are things down here on the land? Happy face, sad face? Well, it is “wild and waste, and darkness is over the surface of the deep.” And the “deep” there refers to the *deep, deep* waters of the deep seas.

So right here, we're introduced into a very, very Israelite—ancient Israelite—view of the world. Genesis 1 tells a story of how God takes a chaotic, watery wasteland and transforms it into a garden that's ordered—and he'll appoint the humans to both cultivate it and expand it. So Genesis 1 is telling a story about God transforming darkness and wasteland into beauty and into order.

And precisely what God does, in Genesis 1, is take the *sea*—the chaotic sea—and transform it into land and garden and so on. And you might ask, like, “Well, okay, so why is the sea this image of chaos?” So we take cruise ships out into the oceans, and whatever—we certainly haven't tamed the thing.

Did you guys know there was a new species of whale discovered just three weeks ago? Did you see this? It was a dead—they call it a “beaked-nose whale.” It washed up,

dead, way up in the Arctic, but it was a completely unknown species of whale. [Tim grins] And you're just like, *what do we know, really?* [Tim laughs] We don't know anything at all about what's swimming under, under there. So amazing, right?

So we—but we have a sense—since, you know, sea travel has—continues to be perfected, and so on—like: the sea isn't the first thing that comes to our mind when we think of the most dangerous threat to human stability and existence on planet Earth. “The sea” is not what comes to our mind, but it is what came to Israelite authors' minds.

If you read through the Old Testament and just tally all of the times “the ocean” or “the sea” is talked about, it is almost *never* positive. It was one of the most threatening—the Israelites were never a seafaring people. They left that to the Phoenicians up north and the Egyptians down south. They never had huge fleets—except under one king's reign—but they were never known for being a seafaring people. And it's reflected in the Old Testament. The sea was a *terrifying* place to Israelites, right? And maybe it had something to do with the passage through the Red Sea, and it just freaked them all out after the Exodus, [Tim laughs], and they never wanted to make boats again after that.

But so, here's the point: you read through the Old Testament—the sea was a place that represented the instability and chaos of the world. It's a place where humans shouldn't spend too much time, because it will destroy you. The first opening page of the Bible depicts the uncreated, chaotic, unstable state of the world as a “watery wasteland.” And what God does is: he overcomes the sea to create land and garden and everything—Genesis 1. Now, you can debate about the details, and all that kind of stuff, but that is just the basic storyline of Genesis 1.

So John knows this. He grew up on these Scriptures. And so when he envisions the new world that opened up on Easter morning, and the kind of world that God is going to make that could be called “new”—a place that's permeated with God's love and God's presence—where does his mind go? It goes to page one of the Bible.

And so what—let's go back to Revelation here. [Tim references visuals] I think the next slide, yeah. So when he envisions “a new heaven and a new earth”—the way of life, the way that humans exist in the world is still marked by the same instability, and chaos, and death. And so what God is going to do is invite the world—because of the resurrection of Jesus—into a new kind of existence, a new kind of community. And this is a world that “has no sea.” *Good*—[Tim laughs] yeah, that's right.

And so what we want to know is: okay, but what does that actually *refer* to, in terms of the physical makeup of this resurrected universe? Does it actually mean there's no “H₂O molecules gathered together in large bodies”—right? And that's what our minds go—and that's a similar question to asking, of these political cartoons: “Okay, so is a donkey actually going to push Hillary, at some point in this election—like, will a donkey appear

on the stage?” And the artist would just be like, “No, you don’t get it. That’s not the meaning of the image”—are you with me? We’re missing the point. We ask if there’s going to be H₂O molecules in the new creation—we’re missing the point.

The point is: we get the echo of page one of the Bible, and what we see is this, is a world where *every* threat to the safety and stability of the new creation has been removed. If John were sitting and having his visions in the twenty-first century, he would say, “a new heaven, a new earth, and there were no longer any nuclear weapons,” or something like that. It’s thinking of the *ultimate* threat to human safety and existence.

How you guys doing? Okay, so just put on this “set of glasses,” and read through the whole book of Revelation, and it will blow your mind. It’s the most brilliant, most brilliant theological-literary work. It’s incredible.

Now I want to focus in here, on something—now that we’re equipped with a set of reading skills. Look at what he does here, when he opens his vision of the new creation. He calls it “the new heaven” and “the new earth,” and “the first heaven and the first earth pass away.” So if you just read that, at face value, what it seems to say is—which “heaven and earth” are you and I inhabiting? The old one—it’s going to pass away. And God’s going to bring about a new one.

So that puts, in our minds, a story. So we live in the present heaven and earth that you and I are familiar with, and God’s going to bring about a new one—this one’s going away. What that’s tended to feed into is a story that’s very common in many traditions of Christianity about this world being “second rate” or “evil,” primarily because it’s physical and material, and what God is going to do is bring about a new world of some kind that’s . . . partly physical? Or not physical at all—most of us haven’t really worked that one out—and the goal, though, is to get *out* of this heaven and earth, and get into Heaven, or a new heaven and earth. And just from reading this paragraph itself, I just would like to invite us to see that what John’s saying is actually more complex—it’s more sophisticated than that.

If you don’t think, as a follower of Jesus, that your ultimate, eternal destiny is in a non-physical world of clouds and bliss and so on—even if that’s what you don’t believe—your neighbors who aren’t followers of Jesus definitely *think* that’s what you believe. And they think that your ultimate dream and vision is to get *out* of the world, as opposed to engage it, and live in it, and seek its well-being.

And so this matters—because what a person hopes for shapes what they live for. And so if the story is to, like, “scrap” this heaven and earth, and let’s just wait for the new one—if that’s my primary way of thinking about it, it will affect how I live and engage *this* heaven and earth.

And John's inviting us to see something that's more interesting than that, I think. Because look at the last line when he uses the word "new" again. If we just had that first sentence, we would definitely have this one completely gone, and it'll be a brand-spanking-new one.

But look at what he says here at the end, "The one who is seated on the throne says, 'I am making all things new. I am making all things new.'" Now, both in the language John's writing in, in Greek—and in English—just take two words, "new things," and swap their order. And what you get is a sentence that says, "I am making all new things." But is that what it says? It doesn't say, "I'm going to make all new things." It's going to, "I'm making all things . . ."

Now, is there a difference in your mind between those two? *There is*. There is in English, and there is in Greek. To make all new things says the things that existed before: done, never, over—*new things*. But what John actually says is: there are things that are right now, and they're going to be *made* new.

So which is it? Is the first sentence saying: "I'm going to make all new things"? Or is it the last sentence, "I'm going to make all things new"—which is it? It's exactly right. [Tim laughs] The fact that we're asking the question shows that we have the wrong category—we don't have the right categories.

We have this idea that if something is going to be done away with, that it has no connection to the new thing it will become. And if something is "new," it means it's completely disconnected from the old. And John will say, "No, sorry—I'm sorry. Language is failing me at the moment. The empty tomb. The empty tomb."

John's not peering into a crystal ball here. He was a witness to the risen Jesus. And where his mind goes is to say, "If what happened on Easter is the future of the universe and the future for Jesus's followers, how do we begin to talk about that resurrected world?" And he does it with the word "new."

Now, we've already nerded out, but can we nerd out on one more thing? [Tim laughs] And then we'll move on. And this is really fascinating because it's a challenge that we have in English. I think it's one of the main challenges here. And it's with the word "new." In the language John's writing in, Greek—and all through the New Testament—Greek, the Jewish-Greek that the New Testament was written in, has two different words for "new." In English, we just have one: new [Tim laughs].

In John's language, and in the language of the New Testament authors, they have two, and they have different nuances of meaning, and it's important to actually see the difference. [Tim gestures to visual] So the first one—it's less common, and you can see it up there at the top—it's called *neos*, *neos*. And what English part of a word do we get from this one? This one went right into English through Latin: *neo*. It's not just a

character in *The Matrix*—[Tim laughs] although that's true, right? But we put *neo* on, like, the front of words—make up your own example—but *neo*.

So *neos*, in New Testament Greek, is primarily referring to the “time” of something—how long something's been in existence. It's “newness of time.” *Neos* is one of the main words—you actually don't see it very often translated as “new,” because the most often way it's used is of *young people*. It gets translated as “a young person,” or “a new person”—[Tim laughs] meaning a young person—one who has not lived very long. So it's “new in time.”

But then there is another word—it's more common in Jesus's teachings, in Paul—and I'll let you guess which word that John is using in Revelation—that doesn't have to do with how long something's existed. It has to do with its “quality,” or its “nature.” This is a little parable that Jesus told, where he uses both words and he plays them off each other—it's brilliant—where he talks about no one pouring new—*neos*—wine into old wine skins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wine skins will be ruined.

Okay, so let's pause, real quick, here. They didn't have Ziploc bags, and they didn't have plastic containers. So when—for most humans, for most of human history—when they want to make something that's waterproof and airtight, what material do they have to use? [Tim laughs] Animal materials: either intestines—tie them up like sausage, that kind of thing—or leather. So when he says “skins” here, he's referring to leather, leather pouches that would be sewn together so tight that it would be watertight and airtight. And so this is how they would ferment wine.

So they would get *neos* wine—right?—so new grapes. But to become wine, not just grape juice, they need to ferment it. So they would create and throw together these leather pouches, and pour the wine in and seal it up. And when they seal it, what does wine do over the year that it's fermenting? What's it emitting through the process? Right, so gas. So what's going to happen to that bag, that leather pouch? It's going to expand.

And so, they're made out of leather, so there's a limited number of times that you can do this with a leather pouch, because by the sixth or eighth round, the leather is going to—at first it was robust and stretchy and thick—and after another times it's going to be stretched and thin. And then it starts to dry—this is why if you have a leather jacket from one hundred years ago, or whatever, it's all brittle, and you don't . . . get flakes and stuff like that—so it gets dry.

Do you get Jesus's point here? If you want to ferment *neos*-wine, you can't use old, dry, thin, brittle, stretched-out wineskins. What you need is a *kainos* wineskin—this isn't about how long the wineskin has existed. It's about the *quality* of the leather. It needs to be a leather that's still thick and stretchy, and that has a waterproof seam. It's about the

quality. And it doesn't—"Did the goat live how many years, or one year, before we're going to kill it and then use the skin . . . Oh, that doesn't matter—how long it's been, existed—what matters is the quality." Do you see the difference? Do you get it? Jesus is clever. Let's just say Jesus is clever. Playing the two "new" words off of each other here. It's very brilliant.

Okay, so let's go back to Revelation and just ask yourself, which word do you think he's using? He's using *kainos*: a new quality. "Look, I'm bringing about a new kind of creation, a new *quality* of existence. And the old *kind* of existence is going to pass away." And when God brings and invites the world into its "new quality" of existence, he will be "making all things new." He's making new things, but more importantly, he's making all things *new*.

So what's this talking about? This isn't just talking about material and physical existence. When John talks about "the old heaven and earth"—and again, you have to read chapters 1 to 20, right? So his vision of the world, as you and I know it: it's a world that is good, that we—who, as humans, as God's images, who have been given responsibility over it—we've ruined what God has made good. We've ruined it through our own moral corruption and our selfishness.

And that happens on an individual level—it happens on a corporate level: a "heaven and earth," and a way of existing, where life is a zero-sum game. It's true in nature: if the wolf wants to live, the rabbit must die. That's just how food chains work—it's woven into the very pattern of the heavens and earth you and I inhabit.

And it's true in human existence too: for this people group to have resources, this people group usually loses out on its resources. For this group to have freedom and existence and to live, some other group eventually has to die as they fight over those resources. And for me to win, you have to lose. This is the "heavens and earth" that you and I inhabit.

Do I need to provide examples? Just think of your day yesterday. [Tim laughs] Right? Think of your workplace, and how people compete and one-up each other. And think of what's happening in politics—think of those political cartoons, right? Think of what's happening in Syria or in Iraq. Name any human community on the planet. Life is a zero-sum game. For me to win and to survive and to have abundance, usually someone else loses and goes without and dies. And that's the "heaven and earth" that you and I know.

And then into this "heaven and earth" comes Jesus of Nazareth, and he has this announcement that God's reign and rule and kingdom has invaded and broken into this—the Kingdom of Heaven has come to invade the kingdom of Earth. And as Jesus summons people to a new kind of life, a new way of living, how did he do it? And he boiled it down for us very clearly—a key moment.

He said the meaning of existence is *love*. It's to live as God's images and humans under the reign of God, and to love God—which is about devotion and allegiance and gratefulness, and not giving my allegiance, and not assigning the meaning of my life, to something that's created and not the creator—to love God. And it's also about loving neighbor—they're totally connected—that I seek the well-being of others, even if it costs me and regardless of their response to me.

And then Jesus—he both taught about it in this thing we call “the Sermon on the Mount,” and all of his teachings—and then, he didn't just, like, teach about it, he *lived* it. He was the leader, who was the servant—and he was the glorious exalted one, who gave himself to serve other people.

And Jesus's vision of the universe and of what God's inviting the world into is that it's—in a universe governed by God's love—life is *not* a zero-sum game. If I spend myself, in love, for your benefit, it looks like I lose, but actually I win—because you win, and you got to win in a way that didn't involve you having crushed me. And then you come down, and you say, like, “Wow, you helped me have benefit. Can I please return the favor? Because you didn't beat me up to take it from me”—are you with me? In Jesus's vision of the Kingdom of God, life is not a zero-sum game. And there you go, that's Jesus.

And it's not just his teachings, it's not just the way that he lived—it's what the meaning of his death is. The meaning of the cross is of God becoming human to take into himself the horror and the consequences of the sin and the evil and the treachery and the hypocrisy and the selfishness of the current heaven and earth, that you and I have all produced here, and he allows it to destroy him. He allows us to win and allows himself to lose precisely for his Upside-Down Kingdom to [Tim vocalizes].

And so the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the triumph of God's justice, in wrath and judgment, on our current heaven and earth and the way of life that we exist in. But it's also the moment of his greatest love and life, because he invites us into a new kind of existence. What John saw happen at Easter isn't just about material existence—like getting reconfigured in the future—it's about the meaning of life. It's about a *new* way of existing that the resurrection opened up.

Let me flow this into one idea—and we'll, kind of, land this and prepare ourselves to take the bread and the cup. Just like John talks about the first heaven and the first earth passing away, and a new quality of existence—a new kind of universe and life that God has in store, and he's in the process of making all things new. In Revelation, this is all, like, at the future, at the end—this is where history's going.

But notice in this whole series, this is the same exact language that the other Apostles use to describe what's happening inside of you and me as followers of Jesus right now—*right now*, because of what Jesus did in his life and death and resurrection—because

of his commitment to us and the presence of his Spirit. He's *committed* to making his people new.

Let me just show you two brief places—this is worth a whole series in and of itself—but just two statements—they're close together in Paul's writings. Paul the Apostle says, "Therefore we, followers of Jesus, we don't lose heart. Even though outwardly, we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." We are being made new—can you guess what word he's using? *Neos* or *kainos*? It's *kainos*.

So a follower of Jesus is somebody with a foot in two worlds: in the old heaven and earth, and in the new heaven and earth—like you straddle them. My physical existence, but also, like, when I'm insane and forget my true identity as a follower of Jesus. The way my brain and body and mind work, and the stupid decisions that I make—like, that's all wasting away. And that should be very clear from, you know, the way my skin's wrinkling up, and the more gray hair that I have, and the way that it's painful even to, just, to sleep these days—you know?—[Tim laughs] as I mentioned a few weeks ago. You wake up sore—how is sleeping painful? But it is, right? Your body, you *feel* it—you're wasting away. But that's not the end of the story.

Because of Jesus, and especially his resurrection from the dead, there is a new quality of existence that's happening, right now, that you're being invited into as Jesus's disciple, which is what connects to one of Paul's most famous statements in chapter 5. He says, "So then, if anyone is in Christ"—if anyone has given their devotion and their faith and wrapped their arms around Jesus for dear life, so that what becomes true of him is what becomes true of me—my identity is in Christ and what he's done for me, if that's my reality and my identity: new creation—"the old has passed away and the new has come." It's exactly what John said, "The old heaven and earth passed away, and the *kainos* has come."

Now, I don't know how you feel about your body, or your life right now. Paul wants you to envision that your old humanity has passed away. And if you're sitting here in the body of your old humanity, you're wondering, "Really? When did that happen—when I was sleeping? When did that, really?" So what does that mean?

It's this image of having a foot in two worlds. So "outwardly," I'm in my old heaven and earth, my old humanity—and it's passing away quite visibly—right?—for all of us. But there's something happening inside of us that Jesus—if you allow Jesus to mess with you, in his teachings and his presence and his life and his death and resurrection—to really mess with you, what you'll find, in yourself, being birthed in yourself, is a new way of existing. It's the way of the Kingdom. It's the way of Jesus's Upside-Down Kingdom.

And there are moments—I wish they were way more often, and you probably do too—where I actually, by God's grace, actually obey Jesus and follow him and love my

neighbor as myself. How many of you know what I'm talking about? And when you do that, you realize like, "Oh, this is real." Like, this is what I'm here for. And this is what a real human existence is all about. I don't have to win, and you don't have to lose for us to—we can, like, reconcile and forgive each other for what we've done to each other, and we can actually find a new way forward in this broken relationship. Or I can find a new way of existing in the world so that other people don't have to lose so that I win.

And when you actually obey Jesus and do that, that's what Paul's saying. You're in touch with the *new*: "the new has come." You're actually experiencing new creation, the new heaven and earth, right here in the midst of the old one. I know this is all very intense imagery, and I can be very theoretical and ethereal, and this is the last thing that John, the visionary, wants us to feel.

John's inviting us to see that you and I live in, simultaneously, the old heaven and earth and in the new heaven and earth. And that every day I'm invited to choose which heaven and earth I'm going to inhabit and make decisions by, and allow to be the filter for how I treat you, and how we relate to each other, and we live here in the city.

And it's a decision that requires an immense amount of faith—to allow myself to undergo loss and inconvenience, so that I can serve and love other people for their own benefit. It's not natural. It can become second nature by God's grace, but that takes a long time [Tim laughs]. It takes practice. It takes a whole community of faith—people committed to each other, to living this new quality of existence.

And so I don't know what that is for you. As we come to singing, and to take the bread and the cup, here's the question that I would encourage you to ask: What relationship in your life—what person—like, get a person—is there a person in your life where, how you relate to them, it's the old way—it's the broken way? And what would it look like for that strained relationship to *truly* be made new, the way John talks about it? What would it be, for the way you approach a difficult situation in your workplace or in your family? What's the new way of doing things, not the old way?

It might be your own mindset as your own body ages, or as life goes on and difficult things happen, and we're disappointed, and we lose opportunities, and we make stupid decisions, and we get in this mindset of melancholy and depression. What does it mean to truly live in the hope of all things being made new, even though in the present I'm losing out? I don't know what that is for you, but Jesus knows, and he wants to meet you exactly in that place and help you see how he's making all things new within us, and around us—amen?

[EMSB theme fades in]

All right, you guys. Thanks for listening to the “Strange Bible” podcast. And also, I hope this series on resurrection and new creation has been helpful and thought-provoking for you. We’ve got more series coming down the pipeline for this podcast, and thanks for listening. Hope it’s helpful for you guys. So we’ll see you next time.

[EMSB theme fades out]