

# Tree of Life E9 Final

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## Jesus on the Cursed Tree

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## Jesus on the Cursed Tree

- Tim: In Matthew and Mark, they go to a place called Gethsemane in Greek, a little garden of olive trees. In John's Gospel, he straight up just calls it a garden. In this garden, Jesus faces his last test. Here, he uses the word. He says that he's entering into the test.
- Jon: This is Jon at the BibleProject. And today, we're having our final conversation on the theme of trees in the Bible. This conversation began in a garden with Adam and Eve surrounded by trees: the tree of life, and also a tree of testing, the tree of knowing good and bad. We begin this episode with the new Adam, and he's in a new garden presented with a choice.
- Tim: Will you do what seems right in your own eyes, which is to take the tree that you think in your own wisdom will give you life or will you take of this tree that is true life but that in the later design patterns is kind of scary because it means you could die? In this macro theme of the tree, he's looking around to all these people who have failed their own individual tests and the collective tests, creating death in the world. And so he will walk into death on purpose.
- Jon: The garden of Gethsemane is a beautiful image. Jesus is the new Adam standing before his own tests, and he chooses what we've not been able to choose ourselves - to follow the will of the Father perfectly. And his choice changed history. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.
- Tim: Tree symbolism. In the storyline in the Bible, trees are a gateway into some of the most important themes that unite the biblical story. So cool.
- Jon: It has been cool. It's been a really fun conversation.
- Tim: We're in the Jesus part of our conversation.
- Jon: This will be the last stop.
- Tim: As far as we can tell, this is going to be the last part of our conversation. From the first episode of this conversation to the last previous one, we went from pages 1 and 2 of Genesis to pages 21 and 22 of the Revelation from the garden mountain temple to the New Jerusalem Eden garden mountain, new creation.
- Jon: And the tree of life is there.
- Tim: And the tree of life is there on somehow the single tree on both sides of the river simultaneously.
- Jon: I didn't ask you why that matters.

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- Tim: Well, first of all, that image it's just odd.
- Jon: It is an odd image. One tree on two sides of a river.
- Tim: Correct. My hunch is that there's also something about on one side and on the other side. Like the language of it in Greek separates the two. Tree on one side and on the other side was the tree.
- Jon: Has two sides. That's important.
- Tim: Yeah, on the two sides of the waters.
- Jon: Do you think that's to do with Israel and the nations?
- Tim: Oh, no. The imagery of waters having one side and then another side is a key motif introduced in the exodus, the passing through the sea, water also the waters on one side and then the other. And then deliverance, the motif of salvation or deliverance happening in the narrow place, one side or the other, or danger on the right or left, or the waters on the right or left, that's the thing. And it happens in a lot of places in Torah and prophets. That's the first thing that went to my mind is that we're echoing the exodus waters except now they've been channeled to become water of life. So it's not danger on either side of the waters. It's divine life in the tree of life. But that's like shooting from the hip. So I would want to track that down.
- Jon: Regardless, at the end of the story of the Bible, the life is there...
- Tim: There it is.
- Jon: ...in the new Eden, Jerusalem, earth recreated. Humans ruling forever and ever. Amen.
- Tim: Let's see, there are 12 kinds of fruit. So that's the number of the covenant family of Abraham - ionic number - but it's bearing fruit every month, 12 months, but the leaves of the tree are for the healing of all the nations. So the image of through the family of Abraham, 12 goes out the tree of life Eden blessing for all the nations. There you go.

The two trees of Eden that were intertwined, that represented a choice of whether we will receive the gift of God's own divine life or whether we will choose to take from a lesser kind of life for ourselves, namely our own knowing of good and bad. And once humans make the wrong choice, they forfeit the gift and they began a train wreck of consequences that result in all the pain and death and evil of our world. And so the biblical story keeps replaying these thematic cycles of the seed of Adam and Eve facing new moments of choice and trying to deal with the consequences

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of evil at trees on high places. We did that with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and then the book of Isaiah was the Messianic new seed that God will make sprout from the New Jerusalem. And then Jesus comes onto the scene, saying, "Yeah, it's me. God's growing the new garden of Eden people out of the family Abraham. He's doing it through my word, my announcement of the kingdom of heaven that's taking root on earth."

And so we looked at the parables of Jesus and how all of the garden imagery could just be, well, you know, Jesus grew up in the country.

Jon: He sees things grow. He's like, "Oh, that's interesting."

Tim: But if you grew up in the country, and you've grown up on the biblical literature, when you start talking about God's new heavenly kingdom and creation birthing and sprouting here, you're going to draw upon this whole motif of Eden imagery.

Jon: Because Jesus was a Bible nerd.

Tim: Yes, he was. Okay. So, last episode, we talked about the parables a lot, and then a new one just occurred to me last night since we talked last. At the end, we were talking about how in Matthew, which is what mostly what we're using, Matthew's given us five large blocks of Jesus' teaching. Jesus is the new Moses - Torah teacher. So he's given us five big blocks.

Jon: Like the five books of the Torah?

Tim: Like the five books of the Torah. The first two blocks are the Sermon on the Mount. And the Sermon on the Mount is introduced with a little narrative introduction saying, "Now Jesus went about teaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom." And then he goes up to the high place and starts teaching. It's like, "Oh, that's the exposition of the good news of the kingdom."

Then it generates all these contrasting responses. Some people don't like him. Some people love him. And to explain the variety of responses, he gives the second block of teaching, which is the parables in Matthew 13. So those two blocks are connected. So when Jesus explains the kinds of new kingdom of God people that he is creating around himself, remember that one of the sayings in the Sermon on the Mount is "you will know one of my kingdom disciples by their fruit." A bad tree doesn't produce good fruit, a good tree doesn't produce bad fruit.

Jon: You will know them by their fruit.

Tim: You will know them by their fruit. Now again, you grew up by an orchard, your mind's going to think that way. But then think it through in light of

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this biblical storyline, you know, different types of people came out of the garden. There's differing ways to respond to the gift of God's offer.

Jon: The garden meaning the promised land here? Is that what you're talking about?

Tim: Well, mainly I'm just thinking Jesus elsewhere in this parable is going to talk about God wanting to grow new kinds of human that produce...produce. Like think of the parable of the sower in the field or the parable of the wheat and the false wheat. So in a way, it's a variation on that theme of God wants to grow new kinds of people, and you'll know the Jesus' people by their lives and the fruit their lives produce.

Jon: What their lives produce.

Tim: And then you read the rest of the Sermon on the Mount and you learn what that is. It's peacemaking, it's forgiveness, it's generosity, it's a life of devotion and prayer and these kind of things. The Sermon on the Mount type of person, Jesus calls good fruit. And then I read the parables about how God's Word is out there through Jesus trying to grow new humans.

Jon: Yeah, that produce fruit.

Tim: That produce fruit. Anyway, that just occurred to me as we're talking.

Jon: That's cool. So, central to this whole theme of trees is that there is a tree of life. And while this idea of a tree of life was a common image in ancient culture of like a gift from the gods, in Hebrew Scriptures and the Hebrew imagination, the tree of life was at the center of the garden, which is the Holy of Holies - a place where God Himself dwells. To eat of the tree of life in the Bible is a symbol and image of communion with God.

Tim: Yeah, becoming one.

Jon: And communion with God isn't just for the sake of some good feelings.

Tim: It is a very personal experience.

Jon: It's not escaped to Nirvana in the biblical imagination.

Tim: It has a purpose in God's plan.

Jon: It has a purpose. The purpose was to rule with God over creation. And so, how do you rule? Well, you need to do it in communion with God. And when you do that, you actually have eternal life. You get to do it in a way that doesn't fade, doesn't end.

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Tim: Well, it shares in God's own eternal life. To be an image of God, one of the fullest way is that they could image Him is to mirror His immortality.

Jon: Which is such a strange concept to think about living forever. Obviously, humans throughout time have thought about that in different ways. The way that I, as growing up in a Christian household, thought about it was in some sort of other world, heavenly maybe kind of disembodied...just something else. But to think about living as a human forever ruling the earth, that's a...

Tim: Well, you're only half wrong in that childhood imagination. Because whatever I knew renewed creation is that has the resurrection Jesus as its prototype, that's a different physical mode than the one you and I exist in.

Jon: It requires some sort of metamorphosis.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: And that's the other thing we've talked about with the tree of life is that it does change you.

Tim: It changes you. Yeah, that's right. There's all these stories about when Moses gets in proximity to the sacred tree in God's presence at Mount Sinai, he starts glowing and people are afraid of him. He becomes an image of the Divine glory. And so people are afraid of him, just like he was afraid of the tree.

Jon: In our state, it is kind of scary to come in contact with a power that would transform you.

Tim: Sure, sure.

Jon: And we also see that in Isaiah.

Tim: Sorry, just one second. We get a hint or a taste of this when we meet someone who we've never met, but who we know all about, right?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This is how celebrity culture works, is these certain people get elevated in our imagination as extremely this or that. And they take on a god-like quality, that when we meet them, we are in awe. And of course, if we were like married to that person or like share a house with them, that would be gone in about a week. And that's a universal human experience - knowing about someone before you meet them. Don't you think that's a little...

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- Jon: Connect the dots for me back to...
- Tim: Humans have the capability of being really amazing. And we experience the hint of a glorified humanity, whether it's good or distorted forms of celebrity. It's an analogy. But it's significant in exalted human. Sorry, you were about to bring up Isaiah but that just occurred to me. Think about Moses, where the people are afraid of Moses. He's been with them all along, but now he has had this experience that marks him, and now people are in awe of him when they see him. Anyway.
- Jon: Well, there's an awe factor but there's an actual terror that biblical characters experience around this tree.
- Tim: Yeah, that's right.
- Jon: So Moses, when he's at the burning bush, he's afraid. When Isaiah experiences the throne room of God, he's terrified. He thinks he's going to die. And so we talked about, did Adam and Eve, when they saw the tree of life, were they afraid? Well, they probably not because all they knew of God was that He was good and there was no reason to be afraid. But there probably was something intense about that tree more than I usually imagine that it will consume them as they consume it.
- Tim: Sorry, you know what, I'm just noticing a little textual detail in Genesis 3 I've never noticed before that you're talking about.
- Jon: That's strange.
- Tim: No, dude, that's how this literature works. You talk about it, and you go read it again and you're like. "I never noticed that. What's that about?" You got me thinking about the moment of fear in the garden after they've eaten from the tree. Remember we're told that the tree of life is in the middle of the garden.
- Jon: The Holy of Holies, the hot spot of God's presence.
- Tim: That's right. The phrase for that is betoch-hagan. So the Etz haChayim, the of tree of life, the etz is betoch-hagan in the middle of the garden. When Adam and Eve eat from the tree, chapter 3, vs 8, and they heard the voice of Yahweh Elohim or the sound, they heard the sound of Yahweh Elohim mithalech (walking about)...So that could be positive or negative.
- Jon: Hearing the sound of God walking about?
- Tim: Mh hmm. I mean, normally that would be positive.

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Jon: "Hey, God's here."

Tim: "God's here for a daily walk." But when the sound of Yahweh shows up to the wicked, that's usually not good. Remember Psalm 29? It's about God's voice...

Jon: Oh, the thunder?

Tim: ...as the thunder shattering forest.

Jon: Because voice can mean thunder?

Tim: Exactly.

Jon: The wonder of the Lord.

Tim: It's the windy time of day, this all like packed with potential double meaning. The windy time of day could be like breezy and nice. Or it could be like Mount Sinai. The thunder of Yahweh in a storm. So Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of Yahweh betoch etz hagan (in the middle of the tree of the garden). It's singular. All our English translations are "among the trees of the garden."

Jon: That's what NIV says.

Tim: It doesn't say that. It says, "In the middle of the tree of the garden."

Jon: Which tree?

Tim: Exactly, exactly. But which tree is in the middle?

Jon: The tree of life.

Tim: And now they are in the middle of the tree. It's an inversion. They were sitting there by the tree of knowing good and evil, which is presumably right next to the tree that is in the middle of the garden...

Jon: We like to think of it as intertwined with.

Tim: Intertwined with. They take from the wrong tree and then they hide themselves in the middle of the tree of the garden. Instead of taking from the tree out of the middle of the garden, they take from the wrong tree and then hide themselves in the middle of the tree of the garden. And then Adam says in vs 10, "I was afraid because I was naked, and so I hid myself." Where? In the middle of the tree of the garden. I think it's suggesting this is all happening right around the tree of life. This whole scene.



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- Jon: Yeah. Interesting.
- Tim: Which once again, God shows up - where? Where does He show up? Later on, it's actually in the tree itself. And it's Adam afraid of the tree.
- Jon: So you hide in God's presence, though, is kind of what...
- Tim: He attempts to hide from before the face of Yahweh in the middle of the tree of the garden, which is ridiculous. It's the hotspot of God's presence.
- Jon: Maybe the tree then wasn't scary. I wouldn't hide in a scary spot.
- Tim: Oh, I see. Well, but it becomes scary. My only point was they didn't leave and go hide somewhere else. They are right there at the scene of crime.
- Jon: They didn't have time.
- Tim: They are right there at the scene of the crime, and all of a sudden, the tree of life in Yahweh's direct presence becomes terrifying. And that's what it's terrifying to Moses on Sinai, it's terrifying to Isaiah.
- Jon: They could be hiding in the tree of good and bad.
- Tim: That's true. That's true. They ate and just, "Oh, quick."
- Jon: "Quick. Jump in."
- Tim: Anyway, you were riffing on the fear thing and it made me think about the fact that I remembered that trees that they hide in aren't trees in Hebrews. It's just singular tree.
- Jon: Once you have eaten of the tree of knowing good and bad and taken that authority for yourself, the tree of life being in God's presence is now something to be afraid of.
- Tim: It represents a threat to you because it's a rival form of life. It's a threat to the thing that I want. What I want is knowing good and bad, to be wise on my own eyes.
- Jon: And its true power and true life. And when you are in rebellion against that, and it shows up, you're going to be put in place.
- Tim: Yeah, that's right. Rebellion. Or when I'm in the pursuit of what I think is good, another form good doesn't look good to me. It looks like a threat or a rival. I think that's the idea.
- Jon: It's type of a rebellion.

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Tim: Yeah, that's correct from God's point of view. From my point of view, I just do what's good to my eyes. I'm just trying to make it work.

Jon: The whole question then is, how do we get back to the tree of life? There's a number of things. How do we get back to the tree of life? That's the main thing. But how do we stop eating of the tree of knowing good and bad? And then what is it going to take for humans who are so now consumed with our own sense of good and bad that leads to violence? How are those kind of humans going to be able to get to the tree of life? Because God observes, if you do that in your state that you're in, that's bad news. If you're going to eat of the tree of life and live forever, why are you this violent and twisted human? That's a form of hell. And so, there needs to be some sort of transformation, but there also needs to be some sort of way back in.

Tim: A way back to the tree of life needs to be opened and the road left behind of all the hurt dead people because of what humanity does in the name of their own definitions of good and bad, that also has to be reckoned with. God won't just hand wave and "it's okay I forgive you."

Jon: He's doing some sort of justice.

Tim: Yeah. The death that has been created in the world needs to be accounted for it in some way. And normally, that's God handing people over to their own self-made destruction. So, if a seed of the woman is going to come, he's going to have to be bitten by the snake that is...

Jon: This is the promise that God gives.

Tim: Yeah, God makes a promise that a seed will come who will suffer and die the way all humans die in their own self-made destruction and self-deception, be bitten by the snake, but this seed, by being bitten by the snake, will actually crush it and overcome it in some paradoxical way. And so it's that riddle that drives the narrative tension forward throughout the whole Hebrew Scriptures. And it's that potent riddle that Jesus is aware of and sees himself fulfilling.

Jon: We've got the riddle and we've got the trees. And we're combining these two ideas, where we are, the Bible is of two cosmic trees and this idea of someone coming to atone. And as you move forward in the story, you see this idea of atonement come through sacrificing on an altar something innocent on our behalf.

Tim: Always in relationship to trees on high places.

Jon: But the image overlaps with Eden and trees on high places because they're using tree to create an altar to make the sacrifice on a high place.

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And oftentimes too, in Hebrew Scriptures, you find a character get to a tree on a high place and a form of Eden kind of begins to materialize. Like you get the sense of "Oh, there's going to be access back to Eden in the tree of life. So all these images continue through. And we're going to talk about the fig tree, right, with Jesus?"

Tim: Mh mm.

Jon: So the ultimate high place in the story of the Hebrew Scriptures becomes Jerusalem.

Tim: Jerusalem. And in the story of David.

Jon: In the story of David

Tim: Yeah, crucially important for understanding the Jesus story.

Jon: And Jerusalem then becomes this opportunity to create Eden. And David brings up God's presence in the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

Tim: To the top of the hill.

Jon: Top of the hill, prayed, dancing, and it's going to be awesome. And God's like, "I'm going to build you into this great family."

Tim: Well, David says, "I want to build you a nice house of cedar trees," and God's like, "You know, I love this tent. This tent that Moses helped me make is legit."

Jon: "It feels cozy."

Tim: "I never asked you for a house. I'm good. How about this? I'll build you a house?" God says, "David, I'm going to raise up a seed from you who will build my house and I will establish his house as a kingdom for forever and ever in eternal garden royal temple, Jerusalem.

Jon: So we know the seed is going to deal with evil and sin, the snake, and sacrifice himself but also create a kingdom.

Tim: God also says, "Along with that seed, that royal seed, I'm going to plant my people in that new Jerusalem to new king, new people, sin will have to be dealt with." All that. You're like, "Wow, it's not going to be David, but it's going to be someone from his seed." And welcome to the books of 1 and 2 Kings which shows you every generation of the seed of David almost, but not really. For almost is Solomon, who actually builds the temple. And we've talked about his story a lot.

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Jon: He's a big contender and he creates Israel to be a very beautiful and productive and abundant place.

Tim: Yeah, every Israelite in his day sat under their own vine and a fig tree.

Jon: It's what we want.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. We got a temple, but then he blows it. He chooses the wrong tree at the end of his life, which is taking many foreign wives and political alliances, giving allegiance to their gods. And then those Gods get their little pseudo-Eden's setup on idolatrous mountain shrine gardens all over the land. They are called the high places. And so the story of 1 and 2 Kings is a story of how the potential New Eden that David and Solomon tried to create ends up becoming a false Eden that needs to undergo its destruction and exile.

Jon: Which is what Isaiah talks about.

Tim: Which is what Isaiah talks about. It's that part of the story that Jesus steps into, namely, the aftermath centuries now of Israel living in the consequences of the failure of the seed of David.

Jon: They have been exiled. Now they're in this weird state where it's like they're coming back. They are in the land, they're still occupied by foreign powers.

Tim: That's right. And so Jesus comes onto the scene with a message. One, God's kingdom is arriving. But he doesn't take that message, therefore, to go start his thing in Jerusalem. Surely he went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem all throughout his life. That's what the gospel of John shows us. But Matthew, Mark, and Luke want to save Jesus's journey to Jerusalem for the climax of their stories. Because the showdown now of the two Edens, if you think Jerusalem was supposed to become a true Eden, it didn't. And now for centuries, it's been under foreign occupation. Abraham's family is semi in charge there in Jesus' day. You got the high priests. No kings. The high priest, priesthood, temples...

Jon: Got some autonomy.

Tim: A temple was built by Herod the Great. So it was half like tourist attraction, half place to honor the God of Israel. It is overshadowed by a huge Antonia Fortress, where Pilate the Roman governor has archers positioned 24/7. So who's really in charge there? So that's Jerusalem in Jesus' eyes. I mean, he's going around to all the wrong people in all the wrong places saying, "Actually the kingdom of God is up here in Galilee. It's over by the Jordan. It's even reaching up into the pagan parts of Tiro and Sidon and it's drawing near to us, God's kingdom, and it's planting all

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new kinds of New Eden people." Like the parables we're just talking about.

Jesus starting the New Eden but outside Jerusalem. And then the showdown is King Jesus, the seed of David and the woman bringing his new Eden royal movement to the false Eden of actual Jerusalem. It's a way to think about it. And this helps explain one of the most puzzling stories in the gospels about a strange thing Jesus does to a tree when he shows up in Jerusalem after Palm Sunday. You want to talk about that?

Jon: Let's talk about that.

Tim: All right.

[00:28:05]

Tim: We're going to use the gospel of Mark's account of the events because they highlight a number of things. This is Mark 11 where Jesus is showing up in Jerusalem in Mark's account for the first time. Again, of course, he went many times throughout his life but Mark saves it for the climax because it's a showdown of rival kingdoms. First, the chapter 11, he's arranged in a two-step sequence. The first thing he does is ride into Jerusalem. This is Palm Sunday. People laying down their clothes, hailing him, "Blessing to see who comes in the name of the Lord." They're quoting from Psalm 118. Then what we get is the three verse story of Jesus seeing a fig tree - we'll read it in a moment. This is just an overview - and he curses the fig tree for not having figs on it. It has leaves but has no fig.

Jon: Jesus is having a bad morning.

Tim: Then he goes - that's after he left - he went grown into Jerusalem, everybody hails them, he has that argument with the temple leaders. And he's leaving Jerusalem, curses fig tree. Next day goes back into Jerusalem, has another showdown confrontation. This is when he turns over the tables and quotes Isaiah 56 and Jeremiah 7 saying, "This isn't the house of Yahweh anymore. This is the den of rebels and treasonous traders." Then he goes back outside the city again and it's fig tree part two. The disciples say, "Well, look, that fig tree that you cursed is now all weathered up." And then that Jesus's conversation about. It's a two-step sequence. And Mark has intentionally broken the fig tree story in two and connected it to these two confrontations with the tempo leaders of Jerusalem.

This is gospel authors imitating and carrying on The tradition of biblical narrative of literary design is an invitation to meditation and pondering.

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Somehow, cursing and weathering of this fig tree is interwoven with Jesus pronouncing doom on current Jerusalem and the temple.

Jon: And you're thinking that by the literary design?

Tim: Literary design. I get a story of Jesus riding up to Jerusalem, getting to an argument with the leadership, cursing the fig tree part 1. Jesus goes back to Jerusalem, symbolically disrupts the sacrificial system, and then announces that it's corrupt and going to be destroyed. Fig tree part 2.

Jon: The gospel author isn't just like, "Oh, I forgot to finish the fig tree story."

Tim: Correct.

Jon: He's doing it on purpose.

Tim: In Matthew's account of this, he's rearranged it so that he puts fig tree part one and two together into one single narrative that's unbroken because he's has a different strategy in what he's doing. In Mark, his strategy is to interweave two temple stories with a fig tree story. So you're supposed to ponder, "Hmm what is Jesus speaking against in the temple stories? Against the leadership and against the corrupt generation and announcing the temple's destruction. What is Jesus speaking against in the tree story? A fig tree that looks like it's healthy and green but it's producing no fruit.

Jon: A tree with no fruit.

Tim: Okay, so here, let's read the fig tree story for now. I just read the palm Sunday, goes into Jerusalem, argument with the leaders. "Teacher, tell your disciples to stop shouting all this. I tell you, the rocks will cry out. Jesus walks away. Now, he's walking away from the temple and seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf. It has leaves all over it. He went to see perhaps he could find something on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the time of figs. And he said to it, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.'"

Jon: Grumpy Jesus. "I wanted some figs."

Tim: So Mark explicitly says it's not the time for figs. It's springtime. It's Passover week. Jesus time does arrival to the context...

Jon: Figs comes when? In summer or something?

Tim: Yeah, I guess they must come later. So that's what makes this odd is Mark explicitly says, "This isn't the time of year you find figs anyway." So there's something else going on here. There's something symbolic

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happening here. A tree that has leaves ought to produce fruit, not in the time of year, but almost...fruit trees. Genesis 1, trees with seeds in them produce fruit.

Jon: Or Psalm 1, a tree produces every month.

Tim: That's right. Well, produces fruit in its time.

Jon: Oh, in its time. Well in Revelation 22, it produces every month.

Tim: Correct. This is more than just about a fig tree. This is very similar to Ezekiel's strange symbolic acts that he performed out in public. This is similar to Isaiah walking around naked. This is similar to Jeremiah taking like dirty underwear and hiding it under a rock. It's a prophetic sign act like he's about to go do in the temple.

Jon: Throwing over the table?

Tim: Correct. The idea of a tree that ought to be producing perpetual fruit, but it's not, that's the English here. And Mark explicitly tells you that that's what it is when saying, "That's not the time of figs." So why did Jesus expect a fig tree to produce fruit year-round? Because it's a symbol for something more. So when in the previous story Jesus was riding in Jerusalem and the people are shouting Psalm 118, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of Lord. Hosanna in the highest," this whole thing is interlaced with hyperlinked Old Testament texts.

Can I think of any important passages in the Hebrew Scriptures where Israel is compared to fig trees and fruit or weathering? Oh, yes. There's quite a few, but two in particular. The next day when Jesus goes into the temple, he's going to be quoting from Jeremiah 7. Here in the story of the cursing of the fig tree, there's something going on with Jeremiah 8. Jeremiah is announcing the downfall of current Jerusalem leadership, which he said was corrupt. In vs. 12 of chapter 8, he says, "'At the time of their punishment, they will be brought down,' says the Lord. 'I will surely snatch them away,' declares the Lord. There will be no grapes on the vine, no figs on the fig tree, and the leaf will wither. And what I have given them - which is like the promised land - will pass away." So, there's the fig tree that is Israel, Jerusalem in particular, but there's no figs on it and the leaf is going to wither. Because I gave them all these trees and they squandered it.

The other one is Micah 7. This one's good. "Oh, what misery is mine! I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard; but there's no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave. The faithful have been swept from the land; no upright person remains. The day when you post your watchmen, your punishment will come." But

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here, the prophet is depicted as somebody looking for early fruit from a fig tree and he doesn't find it. What does mean? I'm expecting faithful, upright covenant loyal people and there's none of them around. And so the fig tree is coming down. So that's the thing. That's the thing.

Jon: It's a prophetic image.

Tim: It's a prophetic image. So Jesus goes into the temple, does a stunt, comes out. The next day, "When evening came, Jesus and the disciples went out of the city. In the morning, they went along and they saw that fig tree, and it had withered from the roots. And Peter remembered and said, 'Rabbi, look, that fig tree you cursed, it's weathered.'" This fascinating. Jesus says, "Trust in God. I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but trust that what they say will happen, it will be done for them." This has struck many people as kind of an odd teaching of Jesus about prayer. Just have faith in God.

Jon: That you can move a mountain.

Tim: Exhibit A, if you go up to a mountain and trust really sincerely in your heart in God, and say, "Go into the sea, mountain,' and if it doesn't happen, I guess you don't have enough faith."

Jon: Have you ever tried this?

Tim: No. That's a face value reading. It creates that scenario for people. And then it sets you up to think if you don't get an answer to your prayers, I guess, I didn't have enough faith. And then you get all these followers of Jesus who develop insecurity complexes because their prayers aren't answered. What is this mountain?

Jon: If you could master this type of prayer, you'd be doing a really good business in mining.

Tim: You'd be a Jedi.

Jon: You'd be a Jedi.

Tim: So the fig tree is the mountain. It is Jerusalem. It is the temple.

Jon: But why would you throw the mountain...?

Tim: What did Jesus just do in the temple? He turned over the table, he quoted Jeremiah 7. What was Jeremiah 7 all about? It's Jeremiah standing right where Jesus's saying, "This whole mountain, the whole temple and Jerusalem is getting taken out by Babylon. Jesus goes up and



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does makes the same announcement. And then he comes down and the fig tree which symbolizes the temple in Jerusalem as a false Eden withers. So essentially, think from Jesus's point of view. He's just like Jeremiah. Everybody thinks it's fine. "We've worked out a situation with the Romans. Not great, but we've got one of the wonders of the world here, the Temple, and I'm sure the God of Israel is fine with this." And Jesus is like Jeremiah. It's not fine. And so he is exercising faith when he goes in and predicts the destruction of the temple.

Jon: So he's talking about himself.

Tim: He's talking about himself and his own faith that he is exercising as he's predicting the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jon: But he says, "If anyone."

Tim: That's right. And then he's turning it into a model of faith for his disciples, I think.

Jon: You need to have faith too that God will do something new here.

Tim: Yeah. In this case, faith that God will bring justice on the corrupt empires of our world that he's called to rule with justice under his authority.

Jon: So to move a mountain, we've talked about how there's these false mountains with false idols, false trees of life, and Jerusalem has become one of them.

Tim: Jerusalem has become a false Eden.

Jon: But there's all sorts of them.

Tim: That's right. But Jerusalem is the special one because it's where God promised David through the seed and so on.

Jon: But what he's talking about himself, then he's dealing with the main issue for God's plan to rescue the world. But if you universalize it, it's kind of like whatever idol you've created on whatever mountaintop, God can throw it into the sea.

Tim: That's right. And part of the role of Jesus' disciple is a prophetic role of exposing false trees of life that human communities manufacture.

Jon: To trust God and have faith, identify that false Eden, and then...

Tim: And announcing that that thing's going to come down.

Jon: And it will happen.

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- Tim: It will happen. It may not happen in your lifetime.
- Jon: Well, maybe if it's your small idol, it will.
- Tim: True. Think about it this way. The mountain of Jerusalem being thrown into the heart of the sea didn't happen in Jesus' life. It happened 40 years after his death and resurrection.
- Jon: The heart of the sea is an image of the abyss, the chaotic waters that God created of.
- Tim: Genesis 1:2. It's the dry land corrupting back into the dark chaotic waters. It's decreation.
- Jon: The mountain garden came up out of the waters in Genesis 1 and 2.
- Tim: Now it's going to sink back into it. It's just occurring to me in this moment that he's depicting the reversal of Genesis 1 - the dry land sinking back in to the sea. Once I saw how the piece is connected this whole passage just leaped of the page in a new way. Pause. This is Jesus is essentially throwing down the gauntlet. Jesus is in aggression mode in a new way in the gospel. He's been up in Galilee doing his own thing, planting new people...
- Jon: Peace-loving Jesus.
- Tim: Correct. Then he goes to Jerusalem. He's not killing his enemies, but he's not passive
- Jon: No.
- Tim: He's very intentional about a nonviolent approach. But it is a nonviolent approach resistance and confrontation with the powers.
- Jon: Nonviolent confrontation.
- Tim: What is Mark 11 except a series of intense confrontations with the powers of Jerusalem? And what he warns is actually they're going to kill themselves. They're going to bring about their own destruction. So that's Jesus' pronouncement on the current false Eden that is Jerusalem and the temple. The way the design pattern works then is, well, when is the true seed going to ascend a true Eden to do the Noah, Abraham, Moses suffering servant of Isaiah thing? Which is both to cover for the sins of humanity...
- Jon: And provide a way back to the tree of life.
- Tim: ...and open up a way back to the tree of life.

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Jon: Which is God's presence.

Tim: Correct. That chain of events starts from the garden of Gethsemane.

[00:43:53]

Tim: After the Passover meal that Jesus has with his disciples in the upper room, the last supper...

Jon: The yearly meal to commemorate the exodus - the liberation from slavery,

Tim: Correct. You would eat the meat of this lamb whose blood you would smear over the door because the God was bringing a flood of justice upon the wicked in the 10th and final plague. But He provides a means of salvation. And it's putting the blood on the wood of your doorway. So Jesus has that meal. and then he adapts the symbols of the bread and the wine to refer to him and his coming death. "This is my body. This is my blood."

Then they leave, they go out into the night, and Jesus takes them to a small garden. The name of the garden is given actually only in two of the Gospels, if I remember. In Matthew and Mark, they go to a place called Gethsemane in Greek or Gat Shmaním in Hebrew. "Gat" means a wine presser or an olive press, which is either depression in the ground, like a stone, small pit you make, or you could make it on the platform. You have the stone that you grind...

Jon: The olives?

Tim: Olives. ...and then the oil can drain. So it's an olive grove takes him to a little garden of olive trees. John in John's Gospel, he straight up just calls it a garden in John 18. There you go. No one knows the exact spot, but it's somewhere on that western flank of the Mount of Olives.

Jon: And there's still olive trees there?

Tim: And there's still olive groves and there's a couple famous spots that have been created by the Russian Orthodox and Catholic churches. It's like a space to go pray in beautiful groves. In this garden, Jesus faces his last test. Remember his first test was in the wilderness. Then here, he uses the word.

Jon: That it's a test?

Tim: Yeah. He says that he's entering into the test.

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Jon: So the test in the garden at the beginning of the Bible was, "Will you trust and eat of the tree of life? Or will you take the tree of knowing good and bad on your own terms?"

Tim: Will you do what seems wise in your own eyes, which is to take the tree that you think in your own wisdom will give you life or will you take of this tree that is true life but that in the later design patterns is kind of scary - because it means you could die?

Jon: It means you could die.

Tim: It's on fire.

Jon: It appears that if you take it you will die.

Tim: Yeah. That's how it appeared to Moses drawing near the bush. That's why he's afraid. Certainly, how it appears to Isaiah when he wakes up in the Holy of Holies.

Jon: So here's Jesus in the garden with a test.

Tim: With a test. So, he goes, drops the disciples, and says, "You guys, just stay awake. My soul is overwhelmed to the point of death." Those aren't even his own words. Those are the words of Psalm 42:5. He doesn't even use his own words in the moment of anguish. That's actually remarkable. In moments of trauma and suffering, you go into default mode. You're not thinking about your behavior in those moments.

Jon: Your body just takes over

Tim: Your body takes over. And Jesus' body takes over and what comes out the words of the Psalms. That's always struck me. He's got them buried that deep in his heart, and he doesn't need his own words in this moment of crisis. So he goes farther, and he prays the famous prayer: "My Father, if it's possible, may this cup be taken from me." That's another Jeremiah image from the cup of Babylon. The cup that is Babylon. He's going to make Jerusalem drink the cup of Babylon.

Jon: Babylon's coming, and it's going to pour out on to Jerusalem.

Tim: Babylon coming to destroy Jerusalem is like receiving a cup of wine that Yahwe's giving you to make you drunk on purpose so that you fall.

Jon: Sheesh.

Tim: So Jesus sees himself as taking the cup of this new Babylon well, which is the false Eden. So I'm going to drink a cup that ought to be drunk by the leaders of Jerusalem, and I'm going to drink the cup. Yet not my will, but

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your will. He's quoting from his own prayer - the Lord's Prayer right here. "May your kingdom come, your will be done."

Jon: Oh, wow, he's putting his own prayer in practice.

Tim: Yeah, this is his prayer.

Jon: Not what I think should be done, but your wisdom.

Tim: Correct. How is God's kingdom going to be restored over the world?

Jon: That's the prayer you pray as you walk past the tree of knowing good and bad.

Tim: Good. Good.

Jon: You look at it, you look at that low branch and that delicious fruit and you say, "Not my will but your will."

Tim: What I want is this less threatening, more appealing version of life. Wow, that's a good way of putting it. "But your will, Father is for me to take this tree/cup that I can't at this moment see how that will lead to life."

Jon: You want me to eat of the tree of life and it looks like death. Man, that's what Abraham did with Isaac, right?

Tim: Exactly, Abraham, and Isaac. God gives you the promise...

Jon: Wisdom is actually is killing my son. That's death.

Tim: That's death for my son that you said you would get to me to make a nation. That can't be what you want.

Jon: God's wisdom doesn't always feel like the best way to go.

Tim: Sometimes it appears this foolishness. That's what's happening here. He returned to his disciples and they're asleep. "Couldn't you keep watch with me for just an hour?" he asked Peter. Watch and pray so that you don't enter into the test." That's also from the Lord's Prayer. "Lead us not into the test." Don't lead us into the test. Because humans usually fail the test.

Jon: Please keep the test away.

Tim: Yeah, keep the test away. Actually, lead us not into the test and deliver us from the evil one. That's a dense little line in the Lord's Prayer. "Don't lead us into the test - implied. But if you do, please deliver me from the evil one. So when I face my own test at the trees, please save me from

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the test. I'm not strong enough, Lord. Well, I don't trust myself when I'm sitting by the trees with my own test. But if you do lead me to the test..."

Jon: Very self-aware thing to pray.

Tim: "But if you do lead me to the test, please, God deliver me from the power of the snake." That's what this is about.

Jon: It's cool.

Tim: It's so powerful. Notice Jesus doesn't say, "So that I don't enter into the test." Because Jesus is like, "I can handle the test." He's handling it. He's struggling but he's handling it. He knows Peter won't. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it's not possible for this cup to be taken from me..." Notice the shift. The first time is "if it is possible, may it be taken from me." The second time, it's sinking in. "It's not possible, is it? This is my calling." "If it's not possible for the cup to be taken away, may your will be done." He came back again, found them sleeping because their eyes were heavy.

Jon: I know that feeling. Oh, man.

Tim: So he left them and went away again and a third round prayed saying the same thing. Dude.

Jon: He's working it out.

Tim: He's working it out.

Jon: It wasn't like Jesus was like, "It's easy. Passing this test, guys with flying colors. I could do it blindfolded." He's struggling.

Tim: He is struggling. That's one layer of meaning here. Another layer of meaning - this is just occurring to me for the first time - is the repetition of the motif of three. Abraham and Isaac reach the mountain on the third day. I forget if there's a three in Moses at Sinai. There are some other threes. Israel reached their point of crisis in the wilderness for water on the third day.

Jon: Third day of no water. And then they're tested.

Tim: Yeah. Anyway. Then it goes back, they're sleeping, and then he says, "Look, the hour has come, the Son of Man, the son of humanity is about to get trampled by the beast." What he says is "delivered into the hands of sinners." And then on he go. So Jesus is presented as a new Adam who passes the test. Among the trees of the garden, he passes the test.

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Jon: And so if we're tracking with Genesis 3:15, the new Adam who passes the test is going to deal with evil but then also he...

Tim: Suffer its consequences.

Jon: Suffer its consequences.

Tim: He just overcame the snake. The power of the snake, that doesn't mean he won't get bitten by it.

[00:54:22]

Tim: Next bit of the story then relevant to trees is Jesus is hauled off from a sham of a trial before the Jewish leadership, Sanhedrin and they find a way to accuse him mainly because he says that he is the son of man - that he is the divine human enthroned beside God to rule over the cosmos. And the high priest says it's blasphemy.

Jon: That's pretty baller thing to say to the high priests. We've talked about this before. It's like saying, "I should have your job."

Tim: Yeah, totally. "I'm the real Anointed One, not you." That gets him into Pilate's authority. Then Jesus is just kind of coy with Pilate. Doesn't say much, speaks in riddles.

Jon: It's interesting. After he's passed the test, all the intensity, there's like this freedom, right?

Tim: Yeah, totally.

Jon: He's just like, "Bring it on."

Tim: He's in charge.

Jon: "I've already passed the test. I've already gone through what you're going to go through. What are you going to bring to me."

Tim: "You don't have power over me."

Jon: "You don't have any power over me."

Tim: The narrative depiction of Jesus is that he knows that he is the new human who has passed the test, but he's going to knowingly walk into his own demise on behalf of all of the people who are assigning him to death.

Jon: Come to terms with it.

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Tim: In this macro theme of the tree, he's looking around to all these people who have failed their own individual tests and the collective tests, creating death in the world. And so he will walk into death on purpose on their behalf, precisely so that he can open up a way out the other side. In all the Gospels, when Jesus then gets whipped and dressed up like a king, he has to bear the cross. All four gospels have a little note to talk about where he was crucified. It's called Golgotha. In Hebrew, the word for "skull" is "gulgôlet." And then in Aramaic is called gûlgultââ. Golgotha.

Jon: The place of the skull.

Tim: The place of skull. Presumably, a hill shaped as a skull. Actually, we'll talk about that in a second. Like in the gospel of John 19 vs. 16, "The soldiers took Jesus carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the skull." John's writing in Greek, and then he makes a little comment. Aramaic it's called gûlgultââ. "There they crucified him with two others, one on each side with Jesus in the middle." Dude, there's one on each side. Jesus is on a tree in the middle. Come now. The tree in the middle.

Jon: Tree in the middle of the garden?

Tim: Yeah. This is from I think it's Rikey Riesner from the dictionary of Jesus in the gospels, edited by Joel Green. They have a little helpful entry on Golgotha. "In Jerusalem today, there's a place called the Garden Tomb that..." Oh, you and I went there. It's a very famous spot. You kind of get the feel of what a hewn rock tomb looked like in the first century. Riesner who's an archaeologist, he says, "The Garden Tomb north of the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem at the alleged hill of Golgotha is the place where one can go to envision the Ester events. But its origins are pious speculations of the nineteenth century."

Jon: The people there won't tell you that.

Tim: No, no, they want you to think it's the real spot. Riesner is an expert on the matter, but there's lots of self-proclaimed experts on the matter, which makes it all confusing.

Jon: It could be the spot.

Tim: But most likely not. And here's why. It's excluded by the archeological data that demonstrates that it's a pre-exilic tomb." It's a tomb from before the exile. "Recent investigations show rather that the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which is the has been the traditional site for Golgotha..."

Jon: That's a Catholic site.



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Tim: Catholic, Orthodox...It's like five different church traditions site. "...actually lay a bit outside the city wall in the time of Jesus in the vicinity of a gate and a busy street." In other words, what the Gospels describe is right outside the city wall along a road, near a gate, and the garden tomb north of the city doesn't fit that spot where that other place is now. "Remains of a temple to the Aphrodite, who is a Greek goddess has been found, which Hadrian, a Roman Emperor in a.d. 135 erected to displace a Jewish Christian worship site." In other words, a hundred years after Jesus, a Roman Emperor builds a temple on that spot because all these Jews and Christians keep gathering at the spot. He goes on. "Golgotha was a rock formation that took shape as the result of quarrying activity. It rose as high as 12 meters off the ground level, and it owed Aramaic name, gûlgultââ or Hebrew name, gulgôlet, the skull to its shape.

In other words, what archaeologists can do is look around at the rock foundations underneath this building and they can discern the shape of a hill. And that there was rock quarries and tombs and all this kind of thing. So the whole point is that the gospel authors want us to see Jesus carrying a tree to the top of manmade hill right outside the city that has become another manmade tree of life, namely the Jerusalem temple. That's the contrast the Gospel authors want us to see.

[01:01:02]

Jon: I like picturing it as a skull - the hill.

Tim: You have to wonder why the gospel authors draw our attention to that. I mean, it's just an interesting detail. But symbolically, it like leaps off the page.

Jon: Totally.

Tim: A human skull.

Jon: Whoo, what a creepy image.

Tim: It is. Yeah, it totally is. I mean, it's just mostly been in museums where I see skulls. I've never actually seen a skull out in a field.

Jon: A human skull?

Tim: Yeah, a human skull. It's always in a curated environment.

Jon: If you did, you'd have to call the police.

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- Tim: Yeah, that's right. I think when you look at a skull, because you're looking at the thing that I am looking from, that doesn't make any sense. When I look at a skull, it's like a meta moment because you're like, "My eyes are sitting in those holes looking out." So you face your own mortality, face your own future, which is, you know, I'm prone to do. But then it makes you think of the story that that skull represents.
- Jon: That was a person.
- Tim: If it's an old skull, it's a whole life story of joy, the pain, of loss and death. And Jesus is hung upon a tree in the middle of two other trees on top of a high place that looks like a skull.
- Jon: It's a dark image.
- Tim: And there he allows himself to be bitten by the snake that has bitten everyone else who has failed the test, though he has not.
- Jon: And when you're seeing sacrifices on high places with trees, it's an altar.
- Tim: Yeah, that's right.
- Jon: It's a type of altar.
- Tim: It's a type of altar. Oh, yeah. And remember Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah is the place where the temple eventually gets built. Mount Sinai and by the tree on top of Mount Sinai is where Moses gives up his life for the idolatrous sins of the people.
- Jon: Or offers it.
- Tim: Yeah, or offers it. That's right. There you go. The moment Jesus dies, three of the Gospels shift the scene to the inside of the temple. And what they note is the memory that the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the world is ripped into two.
- Jon: Access to the tree of life.
- Tim: Yes, access to the tree of life or the inversion. Because remember Jesus said the God's kingdom is coming near to us.
- Jon: Tree of life is coming out.
- Tim: Not only you have to go to the temple to come near to the royal throne room of God, but Jesus said, "The kingdom of God's breaking out and it's gone out."

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Jon: It's like the cherubim or the seraphim offering the coal to them because it's coming for you.

Tim: Yeah. The tree of life is leaving a single locale to become available and permeate...to become possible everywhere so that everyone can come to the tree if they desire.

[01:04:55]

Tim: So, one other note about the crucifixion as a tree, one of the most regular words used to describe the cross, there's a Greek word for "cross." It means execution rack. Greek word stauros. However, consistently throughout the book of Acts and also in Paul's letter to the Galatians, and in the letter 1 Peter, the cross isn't called stauros. It is simply called the tree. The tree.

Jon: I always thought that was just a nice little poetic. Like, "Oh, yeah." But a nice, just turn of phrase to kind of make it more memorable. But I didn't see it connected to this whole theme.

Tim: I'm 87% convinced that it is. So here's what's interesting. There's this line "to be hung upon a tree." It's in the book of Acts. Peter says to I think the temple leaders, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you put to death by hanging him on a tree. He's the one who God has exalted to his right hand as ruler and deliver." He's the true Adam ruling with God now in eternal life. So that's the phrase "hung on a tree" that's used in Acts 10 and Acts 13, Paul uses it and Galatians 3, and he links it to a quotation of a law from Deuteronomy 21.

Jon: Oh, yeah. That's right.

Tim: "If a man's committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and if you hang him upon a tree, his body shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall bury him on the same day. Where the one who is hanged is cursed by God so that you don't defile the land." So this phrase being hung upon a tree is actually rooted in this law from Deuteronomy saying, "Don't let a dead body hang on a tree overnight." I have a bunch of possible ideas about what that's linked into within the Torah. Because you're not also not supposed to let the meat of the Passover lamb go overnight.

Jon: Go overnight?

Tim: You're not supposed to eat it the next day. Anyway, and the idea that the one who's hanged is cursed by God. This phrase "being hung upon a tree" doesn't appear very often in the Hebrew Bible. It happens to the baker that Joseph meets in prison. He's hung up on a tree by Pharaoh. It's right

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here. And then Haman in the book of Esther is hanged upon the tree. There's something there. In Peter's letter, he explicitly links it to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. Here, I'll let you read.

Jon: 1 Peter 2:21. "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, he did not revile in return; while suffering, he uttered no threats, but kept entrusting himself to him who judges righteously; and he himself carried our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by his wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls."

Tim: So he's weaving together all that language from Isaiah 53. But then he's brought it together with the tree. Notice he carried our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die so that we can live with to death and life. So you die to a certain version of what you think is good.

Jon: Metamorphosis.

Tim: And you live to righteousness, which is right, covenant relationship with God and others. So we're to the trees of life and death. He dies upon a tree so that a death might happen to bring about the life that is truly life. And then to get back into the biblical sequence, then the way is opened.

Jon: The way to the tree of life is opened.

Tim: Is now accessible through this tree upon which Jesus died.

Jon: Jesus' death was a sacrifice dealing with evil. And to do that, he had to be struck by evil.

Tim: Yeah, he intentionally went into our death. He went into the consequences of our taking from the wrong tree so that he could open up a way through it out to the other side.

Jon: And then, in the way of Jesus, we also have to go through a metamorphosis of sorts.

Tim: That's what he says. Peter says, "We might die too..." Remember sin is word "failure." We're failing the test.

Jon: A continual choice to eat of the tree of knowing good and bad. We have to die to that way of being and then be transformed into a new way of being. And we've talked about eating of the tree of life as a type of transformation. And that's what he's providing access to.

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- Tim: Yeah, that's right. In a way, we're back to in Jesus's teachings, the Sermon on the Mount. The way of life that Jesus describes as true fruit, a tree bearing good fruit, it looks like a crazy way of life compared to most human cultures for most of human history - the life of the Sermon on the Mount. It looks like you're signing yourself up to die to things that human culture celebrate as good. Honor, status, wealth, abundance, luxury,
- Jon: I get this a picture of like if we go back to the narrative of Genesis 2 and 3, it ends with humanity exiled and the cherubim guarding God's presence, and this promise of the one who will come. And you get this picture of Jesus going up into the garden, having his moment with the tree of knowing good and bad, not taking it, "your will not mine," and then going to the tree of life and dying. And watching him by obeying God's wisdom and following that, eating of the tree of life kills him. And then you think, "Oh, man, well it's a good thing I didn't eat of the tree of life." It's what that thing does.
- Tim: Oh, yeah, sure.
- Jon: That's what God wisdom does to you.
- Tim: In other words, it's like the way that Isaiah's quote, "died when the coal from the throne burned him." But what it killed was a corrupted version of him.
- Jon: But it wasn't really a death. It was a transformation. It's a passage through.
- Tim: A passageway to the next stage. And then when you realize that, you go, "Oh, that's my way through too. Jesus is doing what I'm supposed to do." I think a lot of Protestant theology, it's a lot of emphasis on Jesus atoning for and dealing with the mess - and that's true - but then there's also him just showing you, "Here's the way."
- Tim: "This is the way."
- Jon: "This is what you need to do."
- Tim: It's something he did on our behalf and it's something that we also need to undergo with him.
- Jon: Died to sin. Put off the old humanity, put on the new humanity.
- Tim: That's right. But the trick is with a phrase like that, all that's doing is providing the paradigm. For each individual human, life, what the tree is will look different.

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Jon: The tree of knowing good and bad?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Or the tree of life. What does God want you to do?

Tim: Correct. Yeah, that's right. Based on your own unique story and journey as an image of God, the tree that you will have to resist that looks good will look different. And then think, on the wider level, every family unit has its own set of choices. As a group, every community, every tribe, every nation has its own false tree, false Edens, false gods, high places. And the way to really bring the gift of Eden life into the world and to taste it ourselves might look like a path that seems foolishness unto to death. But it's the transformation on to what Peter here calls righteousness. Life in righteousness. The biblical story, man. I get that.

I'm not going to air all my personal failures, but I get that on a deep level. I know what that feels like to say, "There are moments where coming clean, owning up to a failure and making that visible to certain people and dealing with it so you can move forward, those feel like a kind of death to own up to the failure. But paradoxically, what if that's the only way to true life? I think we all know what that moment is like.

Jon: The moment you realize the right thing to do is the scariest thing I can think of.

Tim: It's the scariest thing. It looks like...

[crosstalk 01:14:22]

Jon: It's going to ruin me.

Tim: It's going to ruin me and going to ruin others.

Jon: It's going to ruin my identity.

Tim: But it's the only way for this thing in my life or for me to change or something like that. I don't know. Or it's just the thing that God's calling me to. But it's scary. That's often how milestone moments in life look to us.

Jon: But then ultimately, this then is also the hope of the reality that we will die, but the hope that there is a passageway through. That to the Jesus shows even if you follow God into actual physical death, there's a way through the other side.

Tim: Yeah, correct. That's exactly right. The words of Paul are what came to my mind as I heard you talking. In 2 Corinthians 5:14, he says, "It's the

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love of the Messiah that compels us or drives us on." When Paul looks at Jesus hanging on the tree, what he sees is the love of the Creator suffering along with us and for us. And he says, "That's what compels us. Because we've concluded this, that one died for all, therefore, all have died." He sees a second Adam on the tree dying on behalf of all humanity. "And he died for all so that they might live, no longer for themselves, but for that one who died and who rose again on their behalf." Such little inverted inversions. But that's the image. What is the new humanity theme? The tree of life turns out to be a person who is flowing with overwhelming love and solidarity with our pain and death and evil. And he heads into it. Let's do it worse. It's worse so that he can give to us what only He can do, which is create new life out of our death. That's the tree of life.

Jon: The tree of life as a person.

Tim: Well, Jesus on the tree of life but it's his death upon that tree of life that gives us life. Maybe I'm...You know, I'm trying to...

[crosstalk 01:16:47]

Jon: If being in God's presence is the tree of life, consuming of God...

Tim: If the human figure on the throne is sitting in the midst of the fiery tree, that's what Moses sees, is what Isaiah sees, then...

Jon: This is Jesus.

Tim: ...Jesus is on his throne as he sits on the cross.

Jon: He says, "Come to me."

Tim: Tree of life, man. I'm excited about this video.

Jon: Yeah, me too.

Thanks for listening to this episode of the BibleProject podcast. This has been a really fun series. We're grateful for you who have listened through it with us. We've heard a lot of great feedback from you. I'm actually surprised that theme of trees has been one of the most popular themes on the podcast so far. We're going to release our last question and response episode on this theme soon. If you're new to this podcast, and you haven't left a review for us yet on iTunes, we would love for you to do that. It really helps with exposure and it's just great to hear from you.

Also, we have released our video on the tree of life. The tree of life video had a guest art director for us, Armand Serrano. He's a visual artist who

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has worked on probably a dozen movies that you've seen and we really enjoyed working with him. You can see this video on our website, [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com) or on our YouTube channel, [youtube.com/thebibleproject](http://youtube.com/thebibleproject). Also, we've been talking off and on about this initiative called Classroom. And it's finally live. Go to [Bibleproject.com/learn](http://Bibleproject.com/learn), and there you're going to find free seminary-level courses taught by our very own Dr. Tim Mackie. I think you're really going to enjoy it. It is a lot of content. It is a hefty amount of work, but it's worth it. It's seminary-level content. It is designed for teachers, but there's no prerequisite to jump in and take it.

Today's show is produced by Dan Gummel. Our theme music is from the band Tents. BibleProject is a crowdfunded nonprofit. We're in Portland, Oregon, and all of our resources are free, because of the generous support of people all over the world, just like you. Thank you for being a part of this with us.

Femi: Hi, this is Femi Olutade. I'm from New York City, and I use the BibleProject to analyze hip hop lyrics. I've been a co-writer for different podcasts, one particularly called Dissect, and we analyze different hip hop albums: Kendrick Lamar, Kanye West, other ones. And hip hop has a lot of references to Biblical themes. So I use the podcasts and videos to help myself understand these concepts and be able to break them down and explain them to audiences that may or may not have heard of the Bible before. I also write some blog posts and then use the videos to make little gifts to help understand and break up the text and help explain the paragraphs better. We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. We're a crowdfunded project by people like me. Find free videos, study notes, podcast, and more at the [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com).