

# OpenTheo

## Music and Exodus: A Conversation With Derek Fiedler

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### Alastair Roberts

I recently was invited on Derek Fiedler's podcast (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmGgB15kYrLYcOm9MLGvA8A>) to discuss symbolism, typology, the Exodus pattern in Scripture, and music as a conceptual metaphor for the reading of Scripture.

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## Transcript

Alastair Roberts, it's a privilege to have a conversation with you. Thank you for inviting me. Yeah, absolutely.

Over the years, it's been very helpful to watch your YouTube videos and to read some of your articles, and most recently to have finished reading your book. I just really appreciate what you've been able to offer. I've used it in several different articles and videos that I publish on my channel and in other places as well.

So, thank you. Thank you. Yeah, so I was wondering if you could just start out by telling the listeners maybe a little bit about who you are and what you're involved with.

My name is Alastair Roberts. I live in Stoke-on-Trent in the UK. I work for the Theopolis and the Davnet Institutes, which are Protestant groups devoted to retrieving old theological material, forming networks of scholars, getting people to read their Bibles in

a more figural manner, and to essentially, I think, spread and deepen our appreciation of God's Word.

Awesome. Yeah, when I was first introduced to you, it was over this book right here. You had just recently published an in-depth overview and analysis of Language of Creation by Mathieu Peugeot.

And that inspired me to read the book, and it opened up a whole other world of community and thought and intrigue into the Bible and really the symbolic world with John and Peugeot and company. I was just wondering, since you read that book, how has that informed the work that you do? Yes, I've really appreciated the work of both of the Peugeot brothers. I find their attention to the symbolic dimensions of Scripture and the world in which it operates just open people's eyes, I think, to a dimension of Scripture and the world in which we live.

That people generally are not very alert to. I think that the question of meaning is a very acute one within the modern world, where everything is so framed in terms, the world is a source of resources. It's a place where we engage in functions.

It's not really thought of in terms of meaning. And yet the sort of work that the Peugeot brothers are both doing, I think, alerts us to that dimension of creation, to the fact that things are connected to each other within this great network and matrix of symbolism, and that the world has a poetic character to it. Now, this can be explored both in terms of a more, I think, the strength of the language of creation book is it gives us a sense of the fundamental meaningful structure of the world in which we're operating.

It's more discussion of, as it were, the stage of creation and the way in which everything is played out upon that stage. Now, if you want to understand most of the Old Testament, you need to have some instinct for that symbolic world. I think it's particularly seen in things like the tabernacle, the sacrificial systems, things like that.

They're drawing upon these fundamental principles and what you might think about is the linguistic building blocks of a larger symbolic system. And so you have, as it were, the vocabulary, and then you can have the sentences that are formed from that, or the ways that you have the, maybe you could think about the verbal roots of symbolism, and then the conjugated forms that that can take within a specific rite or practice, and the way that we can navigate this realm. Now, the language of creation, I think, really gives people the building blocks working up.

I mean, the way that he uses diagrams in there, I think, are a superb example of how to orient people to just the logic of the creational symbolism. And once people, I think, have got the basics, a lot of other things start to click into place. Now, my work is mostly in the area of typology, which is very closely related to symbolism, but it's thinking more in terms of the temporal patterns that are playing out within the stage of creation.

So you have that fundamental stage, it's networks of symbolism, sort of the choreography of creation, and then within that you have these historical events and processes and characters that are playing out this deeper pattern that's developing and being explored and inverted and developed in all sorts of different respects. And that, I think, measures very closely and effectively the sort of work that both of the Padjo brothers are doing. I've really benefited from what they're doing, and I'm encouraged just to see a network that they're developing around them of people who are caring about these things, and also recognizing it's not just literary flourish or some sort of nice poetic picture of the world.

It gives us a deeper insight into reality itself. It's how reality lays itself out, as Jonathan typically says. And I think your work with typology is quite interesting because in reading through your book, *Echoes of Exodus*, you start out by saying that we use metaphoric language to frame or control how we approach different subjects or different domains of thought.

And I was just wondering if you could maybe explain what a controlling metaphor is, and why you make the claim that the best metaphor for approaching the Bible is music. Yes, so when we think about just about anything, we have implicit metaphors that are operating. So if you're thinking about discourse, very often you're thinking in terms of metaphors of warfare.

So I attacked his arguments, or I demolished his case, or you can think about it very much in terms of an antagonistic, zero-sum game battle between different positions. That's one way to think about it. Now, if you use that controlling metaphor, it directs your imagination in particular ways, and it also directs your practice in particular ways.

You tend to move into a sort of antagonistic posture relative to other positions. However, if you think about different metaphors, it offers you a different angle of approach to the question. So if you're thinking about society, for instance, less in terms of an edifice and more in terms of a fabric, it gives you a different angle of approach to its problems.

So if you're thinking about an edifice, you'll have ideas of things being crumbling or breaking down, things like that, or you might think about founding society upon particular foundations and groundwork that you're doing, and maybe you're building up from that. However, if you're thinking about in terms of a fabric, you've got different possibilities open to you. So you can think about the frayed edges, or you can think about the close-knit character of society, or you can think about the various other ways that things are connected within a fabric that requires delicacy to unravel.

Because if you're going to understand a knotty problem within society, you need to be careful that you don't exacerbate the knot by pulling at it in the wrong way. So it encourages you to think a bit more carefully about all the different factors that are feeding into a particular issue, and then teasing out the threads in a far more careful

manner. Now, I find that when we're thinking about scripture, the governing metaphors that we're using have a big impact.

They shape the way that we approach our questions. They limit us in certain respects, and they open up possibilities in others. So I've found that one of the areas where people are often hampered in their understanding of scripture is thinking well about time as a factor within scripture.

So people can often think about scripture in spatialized categories, even the temporal realities. So they can talk about the old and the new covenant as related as type and shadow, and to the reality that we have in Christ. Or they can think about old covenant and new covenant as substance and something that just anticipates that.

Or maybe they can think about it in terms of some other categories that are, as it were, two spatialized boxes into which you put the respective material of the old and new testament. Now that makes it very difficult to think in terms of historical process, for instance, the way in which the old and new testament are not necessarily related as juxtaposed things that are set over against each other in opposition to each other or highly distinct from each other, but that they might be related by a common root, for instance, that that's being developed over history, that there's motifs playing out. Or we could think in terms of the substance of Christ was always there in the old testament.

It was just veiled. And the question is not whether Christ is present in the events of the exodus. The question is where is he present? And understanding, for instance, Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, where the apostle is very clear in teaching that Christ was present throughout the exodus narrative.

He was the rock that followed them. They drank of the same spiritual drink and they ate the spiritual food, the manna associated with Christ and the baptism into Moses that is very similar to baptism into Christ. All of these things help us to recognize there's an affinity between these two boxes that we can think of as spatialized, set over against each other.

Now, how do we have access to a way of talking about that that helps us to get a grip upon what's taking place? I think music is one of the most promising ways. If you want to understand time, I think music is that I suppose set of metaphors which give us the greatest purchase upon time as a reality. Music can help us to understand the sort of rhythms and the meter of time, that there is a certain pattern being played out and then rhythm moving upon that meter, that there is some fundamental we see this even within the pattern of the week, there's a seven-day pattern.

We have six days of work, one day of rest, six days of work, one day of rest, and then that can be played out in higher levels. And then there's also the way in which you have this propulsive movement forward within the text that does not necessarily leave what

has gone before behind. Another metaphor in which you can think about this is the idea of an ascending staircase where at any point you are in an ascending circular staircase, you are above a point where you stood previously.

So it's working through the same cycles, but it's not just a cyclical understanding of history, as if we're just recycling the same pattern again and again with no actual progress being made. Rather, there is progress up but within this repeating cycle of a familiar pattern. Now music, I think, gives us even more sophisticated ways of talking about that.

We can think about, for instance, if you're listening to Wagner and you'll have a leitmotif connected with particular things that can be developed over the course of a piece, and there are themes that, for instance, if you're watching a movie, you hear a certain theme and you know the hero has just walked in. Or there's some way that the musician who's written the score wants you to connect something with the hero, even if he's not in the scene. There's something about the music that tips the watcher off to the fact that there's something going on here.

It's a way of commenting upon the text. Now, in terms of the literary character of Scripture, it's always doing that. And there's something about music, I think, that equips us to speak more effectively about what's going on.

Yeah, what makes me, what comes to mind for me is, say, like Luke Skywalker and hearing John Williams score with the trumpets. So, like, immediately associate with the hero and where he's at in the story. But then also, maybe a simple example with pop music today makes me think of how you introduce a chorus, or unfortunately today it's more so hooks.

But they introduce it, and then they play a verse and they give it a little bit more context. You go on a little mini journey and you repeat the chorus in most of the same way, but maybe add a little bit more dynamics or more layered instrumentation, harmony, something like that. But it's not quite the same because you had a journey before it and then you have another verse two journey.

You repeat the chorus and it's again, it's not quite the same. You have a deeper understanding. You're further along in that spiraling staircase.

In the bridge, like a climactic tension happens and suddenly there's resolve when you play the same chorus over again. But it's not, again, it's not quite the same. I think that's really important to recognize that these musical patterns, they connect things, but the importance is that there are dissimilarities in the similarities.

These things are held together. And so, for instance, if you hear Luke Skywalker's theme, you'll never hear it in exactly the same way twice. Partly because it's framed by context

and there's no way, even if you're playing the exact same notes, it always has a different flavor when it comes at a different point.

But even beyond that, you will have different notes being played or the motifs associated with particular characters or contexts will be played differently to give a different shade of the meaning of what's taking place. And I think that's a factor within scripture. You'll have the same pattern, but a significant variation upon it that helps you to recognize this is related to that, but you need to pay attention to the differences.

The differences are no less significant than the similarities. And if you juxtapose these two things and think both about the similarities and the differences between them, you are better equipped to recognize the sort of progression that's taking place. Are you a musician, Alistair? No, I'm not.

Okay. It's one of the things that I've found working with scripture in this sort of way. It has propelled me in this quest for metaphors and conceptual frameworks within which to understand things.

I've just found that has pushed me in the direction of thinking about music because it's the place where we find, I think, the most promising frameworks. Now, it wouldn't be the things that would come most naturally to me, but I think it's a testimony just to how important music and valuable music can be in understanding scripture that that is where I've found, even as a non-musician, the most promising source. Now, I'd recommend someone get into the work of someone like Jeremy Begbie, *Theology, Music, and Time*, if they want to see a more developed theological exploration of music as a conceptual metaphor.

Yeah. Well, I think that the way that you lay out the metaphor, especially in the overture, the beginning of your book, I wouldn't have guessed that you're not a musician. You do a very good job of collecting all of the key elements of music quite succinctly.

But as a musician myself, I play the piano and, if I have to, the guitar. And what I think is so interesting is that that similarity and dissimilarity is that you can have a theme, you can have a repeated phrase or motif, and you can bring it back at different points in the song or in the story. But then it's not just like you just have one theme or one motif.

You're often trying to integrate like five. And then they start layering and networking and interacting in really sophisticated ways, which really helps me understand the Bible with this type of controlling metaphor, because it's not like it's just the Exodus story and that's the only thing. A lot of the stories that you bring up as examples in your books, they have a lot of other themes going on, right? And that's one of the things that I think music gives us a better conceptual toolbox to think about, that music isn't necessarily just one exclusive metaphor playing out again and again or a set of themes or motifs.

Rather, it can be the interplay of a great many things together. And I've focused upon Exodus within that book. I could have done the seven days of creation instead.

That's the theme that plays out just as profoundly. I've recently taught a course on Sabbath, which got into the different levels at which Sabbath themes are operating. So, for instance, on the week, pattern of the week, you're seeing that pattern playing out six days and then one day, six day and one day of rest.

But then you're seeing it also in the yearly pattern in Israel, where you have the seventh week of the Pentecost celebration or the Feast of Weeks. So it's seven sevens and then you have an extra special Sabbath. Then you have the seventh month, which is the big month.

It's the month where the great festivals, most of the great festivals take place. You have Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Great Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles. But then you also have every seventh year, you have the Sabbath year and then every seven times seven years and the year after that you start a jubilee.

So the Sabbath principle is being played out on various levels there. Then you see it playing out in further levels still. So in Israel's history, you have 70 years of exile connected with as Judah's in Babylon, it's connected with the land being given its Sabbaths and then they can be released at the end of that.

Then you have 70 years times seven in the prophecy of Daniel, which is an elevation of that still to the pattern of jubilee, a sort of jubilee raised to the power of 10. And then that's connected with Christ coming. You have the same thing in Ezekiel, that pattern of the jubilee year, which is then taken up by Christ in the Gospel of John.

And in all sorts of subtle ways, there are allusions back to that. Likewise in the story of Israel, you have the temple being completed in the 500th year of the Exodus. Now that's seven, it's the 50 years of the jubilee raised to the power of 10.

And so it's the completion of the Exodus cycle with Solomon's establishment of the temple. Now, what you're seeing there is a fundamental temporal pattern, one that's played out on the level of the week. Then that pattern being raised up to the level of weeks, so seven weeks, then raised up to the level of the month, then raised up to the level of the 70 level of years, was seven years, then raised up even further.

And then it gradually becomes this great theme that brings together all these different levels of temporality in the creation, ultimately relating to the great day of the Lord that is awaited in the future. So that Sabbath principle awaits the final consummation of all things. But then like Russian dolls, it's moving down into the every week we're having this.

And even within a single day, we have Sabbath realities to it. When we finish our work,

we put up our legs and just maybe have a glass of wine and just relax. We have this sense of having completed work, we have this period of rest.

Now, this is something that is related to all these different cycles going up to the high level of the completion and consummation and gathering of all things in the eschaton that we're looking forward at the end. Now, once you've seen that, you recognize that they're interpenetrating each other all the way down, and that every week when we're celebrating, for instance, gathering together and celebrating the Eucharist, we're having this anticipation of the great consummation of all things. We're also having an experience of these other levels of Sabbath.

And so the pattern of Exodus is one thing that you can see, but I'm just training people's ears to listen to one set of motifs throughout the text. But there could be a dozen more that I could draw their attention to. There are so many things going on.

And once you've, I suppose, part of what I hope is having listened to one, people will recognize, okay, there are other things going on here. And let's take the skills that we've developed in relationship to this and apply it to other motifs. Yeah, I felt like you're very disciplined in this book because the things that you lay out could go in so many different directions.

And so I think you did a very good job creating a very sophisticated but concentrated book of, I think it's about 150 pages. And I think that really what you laid out with the six days and the seventh day of rest in Mathieu Pujol's book, Language of Creation, that's an important part of what he's laying out with work and rest where music, its primary role is that of rest, it's rejuvenation of recreation and how a lot of the instruments are pointless instruments or they go in circles or they're associated with waves at the sea. Maybe think of it like a mini flood.

And that's just really changed me as how I approach music as a musician in the home, especially where it's like, okay, music is for the end of the day or those days where we just need some rejuvenation of, like you said, putting your feet up with a glass of wine where it gets us twirling and it gets us, you know, it's not like we're building something typically with music, right? We're actually using this as a way of merriment and maybe getting us away from perhaps overworking or becoming overburdened or anxious or stressed out or anything like that. It's almost like this replenishment that music can afford. I think also music is something that conscripts the entirety of our beings.

It's something that involves the body. The body responds to music and dancing and it takes on the movements of the music. And also music is an extension of the body.

If you're playing a I don't know if you're playing some woodwind instrument, it's an extension of your breath. If it's some other percussion movement, it's connected with the beating of your hand or some other part of your body that captures rhythm. And then



you can think about the various other ways in which instruments are extending our bodies out into the creation and also bringing the creation and its rhythms to bear upon us.

So there's a unity taking place there, a marriage of the human body and patterns and music and rhythms of the creation. And I think also there is something of the replenishment that Pedro has talked about. That this is something that moves us beyond the level of propositions and ideas, for instance, into the level of delight.

And it stirs our emotions. It involves the entirety of our beings, not just at the level of the mind, but integrates mind and emotion. It brings together matter and mind as well in a fuller sense than just the word by itself.

I think this is one of the things in scripture that there's this movement from the external word of the Lord that's given to us to this internalized word that is memorized, that is delighted in, that is hidden in our hearts. And then that comes out in the form of music. And in expression in the Psalms, for instance, we're seeing something of the character of the word of scripture in a richer and deeper and fuller sense because it's no longer just this external word coming from us to us from without.

It's something that's been knit into us and now it's bringing forth our interior, our emotions, our delight, our desires, conscripting all of those things and then being expressed in externalized beauty. And that I think is one of the ways in which the word moves towards this glorious and capture of all the substance of our internal reality and music expresses and is the outworking of all of that. That's beautiful.

I want to be able to ask what exactly is the Exodus and what are the patterns that we're looking for in this story? Yeah, so when we think about the Exodus, we naturally gravitate to the book of that name, which is the story of Israel being brought out of Egypt with great plagues, signs and wonders, delivered from the hand of the stubborn and hard-hearted pharaoh, brought through the wilderness after deliverance at the Red Sea, brought to Mount Sinai where the Lord forms a covenant with them and then established as his special people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, then rebelling, wandering for 38 further years until after 40 years they enter the Promised Land. They win, crossing over the Jordan, they win the victory at Jericho and then finally under Joshua take over the land and become settled within it. That is essentially the outline of the story.

So all the events that occur under the leadership of Moses and Joshua, bringing them out of Egypt and bringing them into the Promised Land. Now the Exodus pattern is something broader than this. So we have the Exodus event is the fullest expression of what's taking place in an Exodus pattern that we can see elsewhere.

So within the Exodus pattern, it usually involves something that goes back before the

story of what we have in the Exodus, which is people leaving their homeland out of some threat or danger in the case of the book of Genesis. Joseph is sold down into Egypt, but his family moved down later because of the famine in the land. And then as they're part of they settle in Egypt in the land of Goshen, then they become oppressed many years later.

But we have the same thing on other occasions in scripture that people are alienated from the country that they're settled in, they go into another land, they come under oppression. There is a tyrant figure, sort of serpent-like figure, who's oppressing them, generally attacking the woman and the child. And there is this deliverer who's raised up, the people are delivered as there are great plagues brought upon their opponent, and then there is judgment by the Lord against the false gods of the nation that they're within.

There is a deliverance that involves maybe deliverance at night, like the Passover, great divisions between the people of God and the people who are opposed to him. There is maybe you'll have things like unleavened bread being present, and then gradually they're brought out and the Lord takes great spoils from his enemies. There is a settling of them in the new land, and then often you'll have a building of a temple or something like that, victory over people within the new location.

So that's a rough outline of what might be an Exodus pattern. You have many different examples of this in scripture, but if you want to get into this in more detail, James Jordan has given the outline of the Exodus pattern. Also, even before that, David Dorbey in his work on the Exodus patterns, perhaps the most famous treatment of this in the past, but it's one that's familiar to many scholars, and it can be seen, for instance, in the story of Abraham going down into Egypt, and then coming back out of Egypt and winning great victories in the promised land in chapters 12 to 14 of the book of Genesis.

You see it in the story of the ark of God in the land of the Philistines in chapters 4 to 7 of the book of 1 Samuel, or you can see it in the story of Christ, of course. Christ plays out an Exodus pattern. Yeah, as you said, you use the word echo, where it's like something was pronounced, right? Say the Exodus story was pronounced in the book of Exodus, and then you can see, well, even reverberations of it before, which is kind of an interesting thing with Abraham, but then after it, and then kind of like you would think of dropping a pebble in water or the visual representations that we've made for music whenever you strike a note or speak a word, you see these waves and reverberations, and they maintain the same compression and rarefaction, is the technical term, but the same waves continue and they get bigger or they start reverberating.

So it's just really interesting to see how you play that out in the book. The one that drew my attention was that roll of the mountain, and how you're saying that it's after Passover, after deliverance, after passing through water, they enter into that period

where yes, they've left Egypt, but they haven't gone into Israel. They left the old and the familiar, and now they're in this kind of liminal place between there and the new that's to come.

And in between that place is the mountain, where they ascend and descend the mountain, and they encounter the great other, or they encounter God, and things happen. I'm wondering if you could just go into a little bit more detail as far as that one element of the Exodus story. Yeah, so I think this is one of the ways in which it's helpful to consider the intersection of the sort of typology that I'm doing, and the work of symbolism more generally, which is I suppose a broader category, where you're thinking about the furniture of creation, things like what does the wilderness mean? What does the mountain mean? What does the sea stand for? And all the symbolic associations that come with that.

It's the stage upon which the story is playing out. And so you can think about the mountain or the wilderness, have particular associations with it. Think about the wilderness.

It can be a place of expulsion. Think about the scapegoat in the ritual of the day of atonement, is sent out into the wilderness. It's the realm of exclusion and expulsion.

It can also be the liminal realm, the realm that lies between two places. You go through the wilderness to pass through to something else. The wilderness can be a place of conflict.

It's a place where the demons are seen to dwell. And it can be a place, for instance, where a lord goes into the wilderness and squares off against the devil. He's tempted and tested, and he defeats the devil and his temptations.

It's also a place that's untamed. It's the place that's not being cultivated, where man does not have any habitation. It's a place that is like a sea in some respects.

It's characterized by a sort of placelessness. You don't really have settlements or landmarks in the wilderness in the same way as you do within the land and in places where there are cities and residences. So that's one of the ways in which something like the wilderness can have many different connotations that are drawn upon in different contexts.

The mountain likewise. The mountain, perhaps the first great mountain that we should think of, is the Mount of Eden. We find this out later in scripture that the Garden of Eden is set upon a mountain, and then you have the water going down from there and water in various parts of the world.

Now, the Garden of Eden is presented as a place where there is a sort of sanctuary location. There's special holy food in the center. The Lord walks among his people.

It's a cultivated realm where the rest of the world is not yet cultivated. Man has not gone out into it. It's still wilderness.

Now, that realm is also connected with the opposition between heaven and earth. So if you think about the earth as a multi-layered thing, you have the heavens highest up, then you have the lower heavens, which you can have the sub-lunar fields, so the place the celestial realm with the stars and everything else. Then you have the area with the moon and the lower bodies of the heavens.

And then you have things like the clouds and the atmosphere above us with the birds in that sort of realm. Then you go lower still and you've got the highest parts of the earth, which are the mountains. They rise up to the heavens and they're a place where symbolically you go to commune with God.

So you can think about this more generally in terms of the natural way in which our bodies give us a sort of template for thinking about the symbolism of reality. When you think about, say even extreme locations like Tibet, where you might have burial on the top of the mountain because bodies won't decompose in the same way in the conditions, you can have a natural association with going down and death. So if you go down, it's going down to Shi'ul, the grave, the abyss, and all of these things are associated with death, the deep.

Whereas if you go up, it's associated with movement in the direction of God, more elevated things. We use that language all the time instinctively. It's built into what are often for us dead metaphors.

But when you actually unearth them and think about what's taking place, the idea of up and down as having symbolic associations is deep within us. We have this sense that the things that are more valuable, more elevated, more spiritual are connected up. Maybe we would think about that differently if our heads were situated in our big toes.

That's not the case. As a result, we tend to think of those things that are higher up as representing a rational, higher principle that moves down and relates to the things below. The mountain is the place on earth that is most elevated.

It's the place where you have access to God. That's something that can be modeled in various ways. If you think about Mount Sinai, it's the place where first of all, Moses meets with God, the burning bush in chapters three and four of the book of Exodus.

But then later on, Israel comes to that same mountain. The mountain has different realms on it. Moses is the only one who goes up to the real top and sees God.

He has access to God as God's cloud descends upon the mountain and he appears to Moses. Then you have this side of the mountain where the elders and the Aaron and his sons can go up. They have a meal in chapter 24 solidifying the covenant.

They see the throne of God above them. But the rest of the people are just gathered around the base of the mountain. That base has a different symbolic association.

If you think about that, it's the same sort of pattern as we have in the tabernacle. You have this higher realm, which is the realm of God's throne up above, where there only is one person who can go in there once a year and that's the high priest on the day of atonement. Then you have the realm before the veil, which is the realm of the priests and the elders of the people able to have this meal.

It's connected with the table of showbread, that sort of thing. The altar of incense then rises up with the prayers to the throne. Then around the base, it's the courtyard.

The whole purpose of the tabernacle in one sense is to move the mountain. It's a movable mountain. It's a portable Sinai.

You take the symbolic order of Sinai and move it around with them so the Lord appeared to them at Sinai. Then he comes upon the tabernacle in the same way as he came upon the mountain. It moves around what happened at Sinai with them wherever they go.

Eventually, that becomes part of the temple. In the New Testament, we have similar things. We have the mount of transfiguration.

We have the sermon on the mount. We have Jesus going up on the Mount of Olives and then Jesus ascending from Mount of Olives. We have all these other associations with great mountains and going up into God's presence.

You can see that in the way that the Apostle John speaks about the heavenly city at the end of Revelation. Again, there's a high mountain. The one that really stood out to me was Pentecost.

That one really surprised me in reading your book where I'd never thought about the significance of saying, oh yeah, the disciples met in an upper room around seven weeks after Christ ascended. All of these things, it's like, oh my goodness, they're laying out a mountain. Then what happens is they meet God and the spirit comes down or the cloud comes down, so to speak.

The same thing that we were reading with Sinai seems to be unfolding here in Acts chapter 2 and in the preceding chapters of Acts where the similar things that Moses was doing where he'd come down the mountain and preach and then the people would respond in a certain way. Again, that's a dissimilarity where, as you pointed out in the book, 3,000 people were brought in rather than rebelled and were destroyed. I'm just wondering, what's a deeper look of what's happening there where you have the second book of the Bible in Exodus talking about Mount Sinai and what's happening there with Moses and the people of Israel? Then you have a book that's in the New Testament, the book of Acts, talking about an upper room.

How are those things similar and what are some deeper insights into that? Yes, I think when we're reading any passage in Scripture, what we're looking for is to listen to the melody of the text, as it were, and then think about what are the counter melodies that with the melody that we're listening to will form harmony. Often what you'll find is that the text of Scripture can only really be understood to a fuller level once you've recognized the various counter melodies that the reader is bringing to it. The attentive reader will notice that there are various things going on beneath the text that tip the reader off to the fact that this is supposed to be read alongside other stories.

The event of Pentecost was associated with the giving of the law in the Old Testament already. There was this association in intertestamental Judaism, for instance, the idea that the feast of Pentecost was the time in which the law was given. Now you have a new leader of the people ascending to God's presence, receiving the law and giving it to the people.

The great hope of the new covenant was that the law of God would be written on the hearts of the people and that's what you have. Now the Spirit is writing upon the hearts of the people the law that was given previously but was not written upon the hearts. Whereas formerly you had the law written on tablets of stone placed at the heart of the ark of the covenant which was the heart of the tabernacle, which is the heart of the people.

Now we have a new tabernacle, a new temple which is the people more generally and the law is written upon their hearts. So Paul can talk about us as the temple of the Holy Spirit, both collectively and individually. Then you have the way that this is connected with a number of other things that take place at Sinai.

The place of Sinai is where the patterns for the tabernacle are given. It's the place where a new priesthood is set up. It's the place where the people rebel and three thousand die as you mentioned but then three thousand are converted at Pentecost.

They're cut to the heart which reminds us of what happened to the people at Sinai. You also have the way in which they're set up as a royal priesthood and a holy nation and the way that the Lord descends upon the tabernacle in a cloud. All of these things are taking place again at Pentecost.

Pentecost can also be connected with events like the transition between Elijah and Elisha on the far side of the Jordan. Now that's a pattern that plays out on various occasions in scripture. Moses and Joshua and Moses ministry ends and Joshua's ministry is taken up on the far side of the Jordan.

Same with Elijah and Elisha. Elijah's ascension is Elisha's Pentecost. He receives the double portion of Elijah's spirit.

It's the same with the church. Christ ascends and Christ's ascension is the church's Pentecost. We receive the spirit as he ascends.

Then Christ and John the Baptist also changed on the far side of the Jordan. So John the Baptist ministry is the forerunner. These to the passing over of the baton to Christ who then leads the way into as it were the promised land.

Now all of these things I think give us ways of thinking about what's taking place at Pentecost that are richer and fuller. There are other examples we can think of. The idea of the the lighting of the lamps.

The church is described as a lampstand in scripture and it's not an accident that you have all these people with flames of fire upon their heads. That's like a lampstand. It's set up as a new bearer of God's presence like a burning bush as well.

The lampstand is connected with an almond tree. It has almond blossoms and the fire is connected with the spirit. The fire is also and the almond is also connected with the high priest.

So it's a community of priests. Aaron's rod buds with almond blossoms just like the lampstand. So he's the one who as it were is the lampstand among the people giving light.

In the same way we're supposed to be the light of the world. It's the light of Christ by his spirit. The sevenfold spirit alights upon us and then we bear that out.

You can also think about it in terms of the lighting of the lips of the prophet. So prophets were anointed for their mission at various points in the Old Testament. One of the common themes is the idea that the prophet needs to have their tongue set aflame or the word of the Lord is like fire within them.

It gives them power and strength and purity as well. So Isaiah says I'm a man of unclean lips. I live among the people of unclean lips and he is distraught because he's seen the Lord and he doesn't think he's going to survive.

But then the Lord sends a seraphim who cleanses his lips with coal from the altar and so that firing of his speech enables him to speak with authority and effectiveness in a way that is pure as well. It's the same with the tongues of flame are connected with the tongues of speech the church has and the same word play that we hear in English is going on in the Greek as well. So that's one example.

We can also think about it as connected with Christ's baptism. It's another as it were in it's a text that can be read alongside it. So the Holy Spirit descends upon Christ in the form of the dove and in the same way people in imagery will often have the dove descending upon the church of Pentecost with the flames coming from the dove.

It's the same thing that's taking place. Christ's ministry begins at the Jordan with baptism. The church's ministry begins where like Christ it's engaged in this task of prayer and then the spirit comes upon the church and it's equipped to be sent forth.

You can think about it in terms of many other events in scripture that play up against it. You can think about the presentation of Christ in the temple. 40 days after he's born he's presented in the temple.

40 days after he is reborn from the dead he enters the heavenly temple and again there are themes of you can think about Simeon who's brought by the spirit into the temple and then he prophesies by the spirit. Anna who's praying constantly who's 84 years of age 12 times 7 and the church is doing the same sort of thing at the beginning of the book of Acts. You can think about in the terms of the story of Solomon.

Solomon at the beginning of the book of first Kings he's set up as the new king in the place of David his father. David is about to leave the scene and David gives him instruction for setting up the new regime. Now what we have in first Kings chapter 2 is the removal of certain people from office placing other people in their place.

Joab for instance and Ben Naya the son of Jehoiada put in his place and then in chapter 3 Solomon has a dream and the Lord says that he will give him whatever he wants. He asks for wisdom and then the Lord gives him the spirit of wisdom. It's the same thing with the church.

We have the beginning Christ is the Davidic king on the scene. He's about to leave. He's giving his people instruction about what to do next and then at the end of chapter 1 you have the removal of formal removal of Judas from his office among the 12 and placing Matthias in his place and then in chapter 2 you have the gift of the spirit of wisdom that enables the church to act as an effective ruler an effective kingdom.

You have other themes playing out there but those are just a few of literally dozens. Wow I mean yeah the other one that comes to mind is language right because I think of how Moses what he came down with was almost like the 10 commandments were like the grammar of how to unify a nation and then as the this apostles came down from the upper room right Peter gives a speech and he preaches and it's and the flames of the tongues of fire and all those are associated with this unifying that comes about through language that descended upon them and was revealed to them or given to them by God. I think that's playing out against perhaps the most famous story prior famous story of language is the story of Babel.

Right there is the confusion of all the languages and they're speaking different languages they can't understand each other and then Pentecost is the reversal of that. Now the story of Babel is the backdrop for the call of Abraham. Abraham is told that through him all the nations of the world have just been cursed will be blessed.



He's also told that his name will be made great. The builders of Babel were trying to make their own name great and you see that same thing playing out in the story of Abraham's family. So his grandson Jacob is wandering from his home lands up at Bethel gathers together stones to sleep just as the builders of Babel gather together bricks.

Then he lies down and he sees this ladder going from heaven to earth and angels ascending and descending. He says this is the gate of heaven this is the house of God. He names the place Bethel where it formerly was Luz.

That's again one of the meanings of Babel is gate of God. So he's playing on the same meaning and it's the same sort of thing that's taking place. Christ to Nathanael in John chapter one speaks about angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

What we have at Pentecost is a new ladder from heaven to earth. Christ has ascended all the way to God's presence and then the spirit descends upon the church. So there's an ascension and descent and the church is then equipped as a place where all these different tongues are being spoken but it's no longer a confusion in the judgment but it's the spread of this one common speech of speech towards God in all these different languages where people can actually understand what's being spoken rather than just the one language of Hebrew which is all Aramaic which would only be understood by those within the community of Israel.

Now how does the the mountain and the ladder interplay? Yes the ladder is in many ways an instance of the same motif. It's a sort of human form of the mountain. It's an ascent up.

Now you can have the way in which steps conserve a similar role. You can think about maybe a mediating symbol would be the ziggurat where you have an actual ascent of steps up a human mountain that leads up to a high place and in the same way I think in scripture you've got that idea of the mountain and the mountain can be formed as a sort of ascent of steps and Jacob's ladder you can maybe even think about to some sort of you need to think about it as a sort of ladder made of wood with just wooden rungs. It may be more like a great ziggurat structure or something like that perhaps.

Okay okay you know the other thing that I wanted to touch on with you is that of the the role of women and I remember you mentioned it whenever you first began explaining the motif of the exodus frame. I'm just thinking the examples you use something like Miriam or Hannah especially where they're women crying out for justice, for mercy, for the Lord and say in the case of Hannah she's crying out for a son and she gets that son but then she ends up sacrificing him in a way and giving him back to God to live a life as a priest. I'm just wondering what is that role in this exodus story? I think it takes us back to the very first stories of scripture where in chapter 3 verse 15 of Genesis we're told that there is enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent and that the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head and so this conflict between

the woman and her seed and the serpent and we see this playing out in many stories.

The tyrant seeks to attack the woman first of all and seeks to prevent her from bearing her son or protecting him. We see that maybe most archetypally in somewhere like Revelation chapter 12 where you have the woman clothed with the sun and then the 12 stars under her foot or the 12 stars and then the moon and then she gives birth to a son and then the dragon seeks to attack the child before yeah but then he's snatched up to God's presence. There are all these different things playing out there that I think help us to see that this is an archetypal presentation of the great conflict that's taking place.

We see the same thing in the story of the exodus. The story of the exodus begins with the story of women struggling in birth, the multiplication of offspring but also the struggle that Pharaoh is trying to kill all the baby boys and he wants to annihilate Israel to wipe out the strength of the seed of the woman before he can come and then you see in chapter two Amram and Jochebed seek to protect their child Moses and then Miriam is on the scene and the child is delivered by Pharaoh's daughter. Again there's key women being involved and I think what we're seeing there is the dragon figure is Pharaoh himself and the woman is represented by the Hebrew women giving birth, it's represented by the Hebrew midwives, it's represented by Miriam and Jochebed and then also by Pharaoh's daughter.

So it's not an accident that the beginning of the story so accents the place of women. You have the same thing in the story of the kingdom. The story of the kingdom begins with not with the battle of Aphek even not even with the coming of Samuel on the public stage and his anointing of Saul.

It begins with Hannah and Hannah's prayer in the temple and so in that secret place where no one actually sees, I mean even the high priest can't recognize that she's praying and from there the story of the kingdom begins. It begins in this very long gestation and this secret origins and I think you see the same thing elsewhere particularly in the gospel of Luke for instance where in the story of Mary and Elizabeth the story of Jesus and John the Baptist begins and the story of the gospel starts 30 years previously in what happens with them. Yeah, the question comes up for me is I hear this a lot it's like why would parents have kids during hard times right? How could you justify bringing in a child to this world, to birthing a child when there's so much malevolence and destruction and chaos and death right? So how could we use the examples that you just laid out to best answer that as to why we should have children even during hard times? Well I think when we give see those examples the child is the symbol of hope and so although it's I mean afflicted on many sides all sorts of threats that is the hope.

I mean if you don't have the child then what is there to live for in the longer term? You're just surrendering to the despair but when you see a child like Noah or Moses or Samuel or Christ and John the Baptist they are the seeds of promise and so when we read for

instance the great prayer of Hannah or the Significat they are prayers that recognize in the seed of this one child the promise of a complete reversal of the nation's fortunes. So in the seed of just one birth there is the promise of everything being turned around the turning of the table so the rich brought down from their thrones but the poor raised up and the way in which the Lord is going to restore things as a result of this through this child. So I think on that level alone, I think it's an act of stubborn confidence and faith in the Lord's power to reverse what may seem to be the course of history.

And there's a confidence that even in these most desperate times, the Lord is the one who's over history, not human beings. I mean, that would be a terrifying prospect. And so trusting in the Lord in those times can give us, I think, the confidence, not just to surrender to the apparent forces that rule the world, but actually to recognize there's a higher hand and we can entrust ourselves and the safety of our children to him.

And in the story of Moses, that may even require surrendering that child to forces beyond your control, to the force of what might appear to be just chance. Is anyone going to save this exposed child by the side of the river? The child you're hoping someone will pick it up and rescue the child. You don't actually control how it's going to work out, but you're just hoping that the Lord is able to do it.

Now, I think in the same way, we can face similar situations and it's recognizing that we're not necessarily in charge of history, but we know the one who is and we can trust in him. And that confidence, I think, enables us to make decisions when we don't have all the forces entirely in our control. Yeah, I think of even, to take it another level would be, what if we were to know that our children would be, let's say they would get sick or they'd become oppressed to the point where they have a premature death or something like that? So having that seed of hope is like, well, there's a hope that they could revivify the world or to redeem the nation or even a smaller level of family, right? They could bring things together in a way that makes it better or turns things around.

And we just don't know unless we give it a shot, I guess, right? Or take that- That's also, it's also part of our own formation of our characters that we commit ourselves to investing ourselves in the future. That if you don't have any sort of future that you're investing yourself in, that's not necessarily children, but a sense of something that's going to outlive you, that in a hundred years time, there may be something that you've left behind or changed. It may be a community, it may be a place that you've helped to form.

It may be a family that you've raised and that has in turn grown into a number of families. Whatever it is, that commitment to live your life in terms of some future or time beyond yourself is a means by which we become more than we are just as people subsumed within the immediate present, which is so easy to be within modernity where life is fairly easy. We don't have the same struggles and trials and limitations and

sufferings as our forebears will have had.

And so it's easy to forget that there might be a reason to transcend the immediacy of our situation and invest in something beyond ourselves. It makes me think of the story of King David. Whenever he was anointed as king, it almost didn't happen because he was the afterthought.

He was overlooked. I've even read some arguments that they, there's some speculation that he could even be like a bastard child. It was a mistake of some sort just in reading passages like in Psalm 51.

And I just think about that. It's like kind of like the lowest or the afterthought, the runt ascends and becomes the great king, the great new Moses that brings a whole nation back together and unifies them under a kingdom and sets things up for what would be his son, the new Joshua, I guess you could say, to bring them into the promised land and build the temple. I think you see the same thing in the story of Genesis.

It begins with, if you follow, read the story of Genesis. It's a story of a family, particularly from chapters 12 onwards. And it's a tragic story.

Well, it begins with a father, Terah, having three sons, one of those sons dying, and it is fairly devastating for the family. And one of the other sons marries one of his, he marries his niece in order to retain the memory of his brother who's died, Nahor Marys Milca. And then the possibility is also that Sarah is one of, is related to Abraham and his dead brother.

And his hope is to retain something of the memory of his dead brother. He's going to sacrifice for the sake of that. But then it seems his family is going to fail.

He actually takes his nephew, Lot, under his wing, just as his brother has taken his niece, Milca. He takes his nephew, Lot, hoping to retain something of the memory of this family that has really suffered this great loss. And then Lot fails to really live up to the expectations.

He goes off and does his own thing, ends up in Sodom, and ends up living in a cave in a mountain at the end. But you have the same thing with Abraham's family. He's not having any offspring.

It looks like all of his household is going to be given to his servant, Eliezer of Damascus. And then he finally has this son, Ishmael, and then he's told that Ishmael is not going to be the son through which the promise is received. Then he has Isaac, and then he has to send away Ishmael.

And that's devastating for him. He's surrendering the son he really loves and had hopes for, and he's still not really got much to go on. And then he has to sacrifice Isaac.

And then you go on in the story and you see Isaac and Rebecca having similar trouble. She struggles to conceive when they do actually have children. There are threats to those children already.

You have the time when they're with the Bimelech, there's threats to the children there. Then when the children are born, they're at war with each other. And then all the things that happened with Jacob and Esau go on even further in the story.

And all the hopes are put upon Joseph. Then the brothers all turn out to be bloody rotten eggs. Reuben sleeps with his father's concubine.

The two mothers are at war with each other initially. You have Simeon and Levi causing their father to be a source of scandal as they largely wipe out the house of Shechem. And the whole- It's quite the dramatic household.

Judah betrays his brother, Joseph, sells him into slavery, and then wanders off and leaves the rest of the brothers. And his whole family starts to die out. He's the one that's supposed to be bearing the promise of the kingdom.

Right, right. And then he loses, first of all, his wife, or two of his sons die, and then his wife dies. And then you have all the situation with Tamar in chapter 38.

Then you have the way that the Lord takes that situation. And in the situation where it seems like the promise of the family has been utterly extinguished, you have the story of Joseph and the salvation that's brought about through him, the reconciliation of the family, many of the old tragedies and wounds being repaired in different ways by living out the story and the destiny of the people in a way that restores the old- The old patterns that went wrong are replayed in a way that puts them right. And so I think this is something we see throughout scripture.

It may seem that everything is lost that everything is destroyed, there's no hope. And yet from the ashes, the Lord can build something new. We have the same thing with David, of course.

David and his sons is a tragic story, particularly in 2 Samuel with Absalom and Amnon and these others that forsake him and fail. And then Solomon's born and he's the hope. And it seems that he's going to be defeated by, everything's going to go to out of Niger.

But then Solomon is established as king. And through Solomon, we have everything else that comes from the line of David. And beyond that, there's just so many different ways in which things might seem to fail, but the Lord raises up hope.

And I think that should inform our way of looking at the trials of our own day. If you take any split second within the story of, for instance, Genesis and think about the position everyone's standing in and all the tragedies that have happened, what hope do they

actually have within their situation, naturally speaking? And in most places, it's pretty desperate. There's no actual source of promise.

It looks pretty bleak and grim. It looks as if the word of the Lord has failed. But yet we know from that one tragic, messed up, confused family, come all these other things that lead us into the full revelation of God's salvation in the New Testament.

So I think that can give us a lot of confidence to act within our own day. Yeah, why don't we just end with this question? I'm wondering, where are we in the Exodus story today? But like, what part do we have to play? Like, are we invited to be a part of this journey? And if so, where are we at in that journey? Yes, that's a good question. And I think part of the challenge is using these principles and patterns responsibly.

So it's very easy to fit ourselves into a single slot and see that maybe we're the Moses figure, or maybe we are some faithful character like Joshua. But often what we find is that there is a shifting pattern of motifs, and we can see different things applying to our situation in different ways. We can also recognize that our situation is different from the Exodus in ways that the differences will also be illuminating.

And so what we're trying to do is pay attention to our situation, pay attention to the patterns, and have a sort of interpretive dialogue between the two. So I find it can be helpful to think about ways in which maybe we're experiencing a time of profits, of pharaohs that have forgotten Joseph, that the forgetfulness of the legacy of the church and what Christianity has done for our nations, and the way in which that can lead to all sorts of other problems. We can think about the ways in which the family of Israel was unfaithful, and we find out later that they were serving other gods in Egypt.

Can maybe think that this time judgments that test and divide, and the ways in which we are being tested and how we're going to be approved. Can think about it in the time of the wilderness where the people are being tried, and they've not yet entered into the promised land, but they've left something behind. And that's a motif that is often alluded to within the New Testament.

We've experienced this great deliverance, we can think maybe of our baptism, the pharaoh that's pursuing us, the devil, sin, and all the demons have been drowned in the waters of baptism. And now we are wandering through the wilderness. And the question is, how are we going to respond? Faithfully moving towards the promised land, or are we going to try and shrink back and draw back towards Egypt? We think about it that way.

Or maybe we can think about the situation of being settled in the land, and the danger of a new Exodus, or new Egypt situation arising. So we see that in the story of Solomon, you've got this great temple being built, the nation is enjoying this flowering of civilization and culture and peace. And then he starts to become like Pharaoh himself.

And so it all starts to go down. Are we in that sort of period? And then that leads into ultimately the story of being sent away into exile, which is a new sort of expulsion from the land that sets up things for a new Exodus event. Now, I think all of those different motifs can be helpfully employed.

I would not want to identify ourselves straightforwardly with just one of those. Rather, I want us to have the imaginative purchase upon the biblical text, to be able to use many of those different analogies and to recognize that as with a piece of music, you're not thinking about a very rigid structure often, a formulaic and repetitive playing out of motif, as if you just repeat it beat for beat in exactly the same way. There's no variations.

It's like one of those cover bands that plays a song too close to the original. Yeah. It upsets people.

They get repulsed by it, right? And we're not, we're really working with the same motifs, but in very different ways. And I think that also gives us a sense, not just of where we are, but of what we could be doing, that there is within a recognition of these motifs and patterns, something of the possibility of moving forward in terms of certain patterns of action. So if you see yourself as being in a wilderness period and being tested and tried, that calls upon certain virtues.

You need to be recognizing the importance of persevering through suffering, through being faithful in the face of temptation, et cetera. If you're thinking about being settled in the land, it's bravery in the face of things that may seem insurmountable as enemies and the challenge to actually overcome the giants, to take the promise of God at face value and press on into the land, even when you might be cowed by its inhabitants. If you're thinking about the experience of Egypt, it's recognizing that we're undergoing division events and the importance of being on the right side of that divide, of responding in faith and recognizing that the Lord is greater than the tyrants that might be over us.

Whatever it is, I think it's helpful to think of those different motifs and patterns and to use the imaginative purchase they give us upon our situation in a creative way that provokes illuminated action. It reminds me of how you were talking about the Russian dolls and that you could have like a small Exodus story nested within a larger one, nested within a larger one. What is the largest Russian doll that we know of? I think it's the great pattern of history as a whole, the beginning from the very dawn of creation to the consummation of all things.

And we can see that even further in the way that the triune God himself creates in a way that expresses his character and who he is. And in the very reality of God's own being, we see something that is the sort of fundamental reality from which the creation expresses in some limited form as the Lord reveals himself through the world now and

through the events of history. So I think, for instance, we can have the pattern of the single day, the pattern of the single day with the evening and the morning, the movement from darkness to light.

But that's also the path of history, the movement from darkness to light. So the story of history is framed by this great juxtaposition of the first day of creation, which is then connected with every day of creation, the alternation of evening and morning, of night and day, of the darkness and the light. And you see that in the New Testament where the apostle Paul, for instance, will frequently give the example of Christ coming as the dawn, arise, the light has shone.

We need to be people of the day. We need to act in ways that are characterized by the righteousness of those whose way is well lit. We need to be those who are not characterized by the evil works of darkness, who shrink back from the light, lest their deeds be exposed.

And so what we're waiting for is the eternal day. And so that's the greatest Russian doll, I think. And yet it's connected with one of the smallest Russian dolls, which is our regular daily pattern.

And so every single day is a preparation for death. For instance, every single night before you go to sleep, you're surrendering yourself to that sort of dissolution of your consciousness and your body, which is connected with death itself. And then every single morning, the coming of new light is connected with the advent of the light of an eternal day.

And so this daily pattern should also be a constant rehearsal in the ways of the larger patterns. It's as if God wants us to learn on these little scales. And as you develop these daily habits and think symbolically you're actually preparing and rehearsing for the great cosmic events of the whole creation, not just your own life.

Wow, quite fascinating. I think that the largest Russian doll that we know of would be the second arrival or advent of Christ. And not just this day comes to a close, but the entire age itself that we are aware of.

And then it ushers for a new age. So in light of that, would that mean that we're kind of like in between Mount Sinai and the promised land, so to speak, in like the grandest way of understanding this? In some ways it's complicated because the day has already started in Christ. Christ brings the final resurrection into the middle of history.

He is the first fruits from the dead. So the last great event that we're looking forward to is already underway. It's already been inaugurated.

And so we have a sort of reality filled promise of what we're awaiting. Think of it maybe using an Exodus motif of when the spies go into the promised land, they bring back



grapes of Eshcol, this great cluster of grapes. And what the people can do is actually have a foretaste of the fruit of the land that they're looking forward to.

So I think every week when we're celebrating the Eucharist, we're having an anticipation of the greater wedding supper of the lamb that we're looking forward to. We're also looking back to the past events of Christ's death that was represented beforehand in the gift of himself in the supper. But we're awaiting this future that every single time we're replaying.

And I think as a result, there's a sort of overlapping or interweaving of times and the future is already spilling into the present. And as a result, I wouldn't want to express it purely in terms of a linear movement. There is a sense in which the linearity is broken.

And that is again, one of the reasons why I like musical metaphors, because it helps us to think about the ways that something that's future can be yet present in the now, there can be anticipations of it. There can be already these intimations of what is yet to come. The great resolutions can be anticipated in partial resolutions that proceed it.

Right, so when it actually takes place, there's this element of familiarity, right? It's not like 100% new and foreign and surprise. It's like, ah, okay, this is how it all comes together. And a sense of recognition that when it comes, it won't come to us as a stranger.

It will come to us as a surprise that we'll actually realize part of the surprise is we're familiar with this. It's one of the things that you find after reading the New Testament, going back to the Old Testament, the veil is removed as the apostle Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians chapter three. And you see that Christ is everywhere.

All of this was anticipating him. It's like reading a great detective novel. And when you reach the end, you realize, ah, all these details you had along, all along, how could it have turned out differently? It ends up with this very beautiful resolution of all the themes that on the one hand is a huge surprise and the other hand, not a surprise at all.

I mean, it fits every single one of the things that pointed us forward. And once we see it, it can't be unseen. And we read back and all the things fall into place.

That's where heaven and earth meeting and us interacting and becoming more associated with a being that's transcendent or a God that is transcending our time. You could say that he has bestowed upon us his rhythms that allow us to understand time in a different way than merely like causality or one day to the next, the next linearly, purely. And so in a way, it's almost like how pop up the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 talks about seeing things dimly.

It's like that clarity comes and it comes by like, it's like, we're not in total darkness, but we're not in say like total light. We can't see, we can't transcend linear time completely,

but we can make out shapes and forms and see things dimly. But then one day when the grand finale comes, let's say things will be clear.

And that sense of things arriving over time, I think is very helpful that if you're listening, for instance, to a poem being recited, often you'll have elements in the poem that are not yet resolved and sort of hanging in the air, waiting for some sort of resolution. You don't know what they mean until they actually reach that resolution, but they're already connotations and senses of meaning in play. And as the poem goes on, you begin to see, we tend to think about context spatially.

So you think about the text that's all laid out in front of you and you're seeing it as a complete entity. And the context is the things that surround it spatially. But yet when you're listening to a piece of music, you're not seeing it all at once.

And even if you're playing it, you have this sense of this arrival of the music and it's unfolding over time. And as it unfolds, passages that you've heard earlier will take on a different character when you hear later passages. And in the same way with creation and history and scripture, they're doing the same sort of thing.

I think when we're reading the story of scripture, we're seeing something of this gradual arrival. And what we're ultimately seeing is the way in which the story of humanity is caught up into the story of Christ. And Christ takes up humanity in himself.

And with that, I think we're being united with God. If we think about the story of creation, God creates by speaking. And in the New Testament in John, we see that Christ is involved, Christ is the word through whom all things were created.

The father creates by speaking forth his word. And we can think about that developing even further. The word is spoken out in the breath of the spirit.

And so the breath of the spirit should also be filled out in the concept of song. It's as if the creation is this word spoken, sung by the father on the wind of the spirit. And the word of Christ gives the reality to all creatures.

We can often think about the world purely in terms of substance, as if they're solid things. But often I think thinking in purely temporal categories, thinking of the world almost as a song can be more helpful. Maybe pick up on some Tolkien themes here from the Still Meridian.

Yeah, what do you mean by that? The idea of creation as an act of song. Oh, right, yes. You have the same thing, of course, in the Magician's Nephew.

The book by C.S. Lewis. Okay, interesting. Well, I think we've reached a natural arrival at our finale for this discussion, at least.

Alastair, I really appreciate you coming on and having a discussion with me. I was hoping that you would please share with the listeners what are you involved with right now? Like what are some projects that people could turn to if they wanted to follow you more closely or be connected with your teaching? Yes, thank you. I work for the Theopolis and Davenant Institutes I mentioned earlier.

And so I'll often be teaching courses for them for the Theopolis Institute. I'm currently looking forward to their new Fellows Program which is an extensive introduction to the Bible, training people in liturgy and how to lead in song, these sorts of things, and how to study scripture in more depth. For the Davenant Institute, I'm currently teaching a course on Exodus which has been a lot of fun.

And I'll be teaching for them later on again in the year. My main project at the moment is a complete commentary on the whole Bible, chapter by chapter, that's freely available in audio format online. So if anyone's interested in that, they can go to my blog, [adversariapodcast.com](http://adversariapodcast.com), and it's all there.

All right. Yeah, I know that I have benefited that from what you're doing with specifically the reading of the Bible with commentary and most specifically with the symbolism of the Burning Bush article and videos that I published. And where I can, I try to link to where I draw upon you for resource.

And I encourage many others to as well, because I think that your commentary is most illuminating because you just make it fun. As much as it is like a learning experience and it's profound, you make it exciting to read the Bible again. And I think of just- I love reading the Bible.

And I think more people, if they have a bit more guidance about how to do it, I think they begin to discover that this is something you can do yourself. There's no need to be scared of the text. There are wonders in that that you can discover if you give yourself to its reading.

Are you gonna be writing a book again in the future? I have some things on the to-do list and things that are underway at the moment. All right, cool. Well, I guess we'll be looking forward to that as well, amongst all the other things that you're working on.

All right. Thank you so much, Alistair. I appreciate your time and your attention and all of your insights.

Thank you very much for inviting me on. Okay. Well, until next time.