

God E16 Final

Who Did Jesus Think He Was?

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Who Did Jesus Think He Was?

Jon: Hey, this is Jon at The Bible Project, and on the podcast, we've been going through a fairly long series on the complex identity of God in the biblical story.

Tim: The depiction of God from Hebrew Scriptures is of God as a complex unity, who's both above, totally other as creator and ruler, but also intimately involved in the grit and detail of human history.

Jon: If you've been following along with this series, you've been wrestling with us about the complicated and unexpected ways the biblical authors depict the Creator God. In the last episode, we got to Jesus of Nazareth, and we asked the question, was this human in some way also the Creator God? Because nowhere in the New Testament do you strictly see the phrase "Jesus is Yahweh."

Tim: The gospel authors are using the narrative medium to make claims about Jesus. That's not a normal way, I guess, that maybe modern or Western Christians have thought about this, were looking for a nice sentence that just says, "The fact. Give me the facts," and that is what the gospel authors are doing through the medium of Jewish style narrative.

Jon: Today on the show, we're going to look at what Jesus thought about his own identity. We'll look at the claims that he makes about his relationship with the Father, claims that ended up getting him killed.

Tim: Then he goes and says something like this: "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son reveals."

So what Jesus is saying here is, "Listen, Son of Man, I am the human one appointed to share in God's own rule for creation, but people don't recognize it. No one knows the Son. But the Father knows me." That's his story. Jesus is saying, "I know who I am. I'm the real deal." And the fact that all these people don't recognize it or reject that doesn't affect the reality he's playing.

Jon: We'll look at how Jesus claimed that he is offering to others a unique relationship with the Creator God, and how this unique relationship is symbolized by the significant tradition of baptism.

Tim: Baptism is a way of you undergoing what Jesus underwent when he was publicly identified as the child of God.

Jon: All that and more today on the podcast. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

So we're talking about the identity of God, or the phrase I've been toying around with is "the experience of God" and how God's identity is revealed to us. We've got to the Old Testament and then we started into Jesus. Why don't you give us a quick recap of where we've been and why we're here?

Tim: The depiction of God from the Hebrew Scriptures is of God as a complex unity who is both above and totally other as creator and ruler, but also—

Jon: Fancy word is transcendent.

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Tim: Yeah, transcendent. But also is intimately involved in the grit and details of human history, and the when Biblical characters experience—

Jon: Well, that's a paradox because transcendent means I can't experience God. I can't know God.

Tim: I can't know God in the fullness—

Jon: It's like 40 metaphor...

Tim: Yeah, that's right. The 40 object. I can't know this being in His complete fullness, but I can know this God as He reveals Himself. And this God consistently reveals Himself in historical, cultural moments where He takes on a certain appearance or when God appears...

Jon: Yeah, when God appears, and is made known.

Tim: ...it's something that these people, these biblical figures, can wrap their minds around. It's a human person in the message of Yahweh. Or typically, even the visions that the prophets have of Yahweh on his throne, or Ezekiel sees the God mobile, the Divine Throne chariot, even that fits into categories of other ancient Israel neighbors in ancient Near East. So it's a cultural form that they had a reference for.

Jon: And it's not always a person. We talked about being the glory of God is sometimes...Well, is sometimes a person.

Tim: Sometimes it's just a big cloud, lights in cloud, and other times when the figure wades into the foggy cloud like Ezekiel, what he sees is the divine glory chariot with the human figure on the throne. But then other times, it's more abstract. Like God's wisdom gets personified—

Jon: As a woman.

Tim: Yes, that's right, as a woman in Proverbs. God's Spirit, His personal life-giving presence. So the New Testament authors tell narratives that make a claim that that same God has revealed Himself in a new way to fulfill where the whole story's been going. And so it does so both continuing using those earlier categories of the complex unity of God. So it's going to draw not on that language, but it's also going to blow the ceiling off of it at the same time, and just Jesus, he uses pre-existing categories to explain himself while at the same time exploding those into a whole new level of meaning.

So we've talked about that already as we've been going through the Gospels, that all of the Gospels begin in some way quoting or alluding the Old Testament texts that are about Yahweh, and then they use those to introduce Jesus. We looked at the baptism of Jesus that's in all four of the Gospel accounts.

And this is a moment where God's complex unity is just on full display, where Jesus comes on to the public scene and he is marked by the heavenly king. The one who's enthroned above the heavens speaks and sends the Spirit to communicate the love

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between the heavenly King and the earthly king, Jesus. And that's Yahweh on page 1 of the Gospel of Mark. "Yahweh is coming." He quotes Isaiah 40.

Jon: Yahweh is all three of these personalities interacting?

Tim: That's the narrative logic that Mark's claim here.

Jon: He doesn't come out and say that.

Tim: Well, he does.

Jon: But in a narrative way.

Tim: He does it through the medium of the narrative. And then Jesus from that story onward walks around doing what I call Yahweh stuff. Stuff that's Yahweh's prerogative in the Hebrew Scriptures, and then just Jesus does it. And the foremost example is pronouncing that people sins are forgiven. Not that He forgives them, but He uses the passive just "you are forgiven" or "Your sins are forgiven."

Jon: And who can do that but Yahweh himself.

Tim: We talked about that. Then that raises the question for the Bible nerds sitting around as "Who is this guy?" And they just put it together. "Who can forgive sins except the one God?" So Jesus seems to have behaved in ways that intentionally raised the issue of his identity and authority.

I just want to highlight a couple other times in the gospels where this keeps ramping up, because, again, it's helpful. The gospel authors are using the narrative medium to make claims about Jesus, which is not a normal way, I guess, that maybe modern or Western Christians have thought about this. We're looking for a nice sentence that just says, "The facts. Give me the facts." And that is what the gospel authors are doing through the medium of Jewish style narrative.

Jon: "I want a textbook."

Tim: Yeah. Or we want them to do it in the way our culture has trained us to think. How arrogant of us. How presumptuous. I've told you the analogy that I use about traveling - international travel.

Jon: No.

Tim: About how in the West we know that it's rude to go travel to another country and get off the plane not having done any preparation whatsoever to learn about the place where you're going, and then to get off the plane and just start talking to everybody in English, asking them where the McDonalds is. Or if you've ever traveled internationally and you watch those people, those Americans and you are just like, "Oohh. Bad form."

We have a sensibility that that's rude. Why? Why do we think that's rude? It's pretty intuitive. I think for most people, you're not loving your neighbor, you're not honoring people's other difference, and you're not recognizing the fact that you're in their land.

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So I'm the one who needs to adapt, need to get a phrase book, do a quick Wikipedia history review of whatever, Berlin or something or Paris. It's just like being a good person.

Jon: Learning the customs.

Tim: Yeah, that kind of thing. That's exactly the mentality most people don't have when they open the pages of the Bible is I need to honor these authors and not assume that they're going to talk the way I talk, and not assume that it's just stupid or boring when they don't communicate the way I would prefer them to. Just apply the same logic. It's like traveling to another place.

Jon: Reading the Bible as like traveling to a foreign land.

Tim: Yeah, be courteous.

Jon: I love traveling to other cultures because it turns you into...I mean, tourist is a bad word in most people's minds, I suppose. But the tourist mentality of I'm setting aside assumptions and I'm expecting to see things differently and to learn different things, like that kind of mentality you kind of have to have when you travel, especially somewhere in another culture.

Tim: Yeah, you have to expect to feel a bit uncomfortable or maybe that you're going to make mistakes, and do or say things the wrong way or something.

Jon: And then some people travel trying to not do that. They'll go to a place, wherever they speak English, the food is going to be what you expect, and it's just sunnier than the place you came from or something. It doesn't matter where it is. But with the magic of traveling to other cultures is just letting yourself be a foreigner. I love that.

Tim: I think that's the mentality of open-mindedness to another culture or language way of seeing the world that I think most people would say they would want to be that kind of person if they traveled.

Jon: Take that mentality.

Tim: Yeah. Big part of our value of The Bible Project is reading the Bible in its historical, cultural context. And that's it. It's being a courteous traveler. It's actually not that hard to do but you have to be intentional about it when you travel to Paris, or when you open the pages of the Bible.

[00:12:37]

Tim: Okay. So Jesus is intentionally ramping up the controversy about His identity. There's a line in Matthew chapter 11. It's the conclusion of Matthew 11, which is a whole series of narratives where people...Jesus has done His thing. He's given the Sermon on the Mount, He's performed 10 incredible wonders, to heal people and do other things. Then Matthew 11, Matthew has compiled all of these different types of responses that people have to Jesus. One is John the Baptist in jail.

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- Jon: Like, are you really the one?
- Tim: Totally. "Are you sure? Remember, I baptized you?"
- Jon: "Now I'm in jail."
- Tim: So he's kind of nervous.
- Jon: "I'm not sure."
- Tim: You get narratives of straight up hostility and resistance in chapter 11 and in chapter 12 from the religious leaders. You get a story about his family. His mother and brothers send for him and they want him to kind of rein it in. So then he says some things about his family that are kind of intense. And then some are fans. They are like, "Jesus we love you. This is great."
- Jon: I was trying to figure out the identity of this guy, Jesus.
- Tim: That's right. And then he has the saying at the end where he says, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father." Now that already rings some Daniel 7 bells.
- Jon: Why is that?
- Tim: Well, remember Daniel 7 is a crucial for Jesus' language that he used to talk about humanity. It's a human figure who's vindicated from persecution, exalted up to God's presence, and then given God's own rule and authority.
- Jon: Oh, so all things have been handed over?
- Tim: Yes.
- Jon: That part.
- Tim: Yeah. He's drawing on an idea here of the unique human one that God would share —
- Jon: God show His authority to?
- Tim: Correct. Essentially, it's another way of him saying, "I'm the Son of Man," from Daniel 7. But he doesn't use Ancient of Days Son of Man language in Daniel 7, he uses Father, Son language.
- Jon: And that's I think where I didn't see the Daniel 7 thing, because Daniel 7 doesn't say, Father.
- Tim: That's right. Jesus is overlaying the ideas that work in Daniel 7—
- Jon: But he's introducing this Father language.
- Tim: Yeah. Which we kind of already had in the baptism. Actually, we did have it in the baptism. It's the heavenly King saying to Jesus, "You are my Son. I love you." Jesus

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is being called Son who's the heavenly voice. It doesn't say it in the baptism narrative, but it doesn't need to. So here, Jesus just says it straight up. And he's already said it in the Sermon on the Mount, teaching people to go call God our Father. That kind of thing.

Jon: I got really confused about this whole Father thing, and I'm just thinking through how I would explain it to someone. What I'm realizing is, when you get to Jesus in the baptism, which we talked about in that last episode, there's the three in one but there's a lot of mystery around, well, what's the voice from heaven? We have this idea of Ancient of Days—

Tim: We have a handful. It's like 10 or under passages in the Hebrew scriptures where a prophet or poet would call God Yahweh, Israel's Father - The father of Israel. So it's in their tradition but it's not a main category.

Jon: But the appearances of God that were more developed yet were the ones of appearing like a man or these more abstract ones of his attributes being personified. This idea of someone sitting on the throne who is the father isn't as completely developed. There's some shelves, but it's not super tight.

Tim: That's right. Correct.

Jon: So I think when you get to the baptism, we could say, "Well, there's three, we're still trying to figure out the identity of Jesus, but that isn't completely clear. We see that he's doing Yahweh stuff, we see some of the language he's using." So we know that what Mark is saying is, this is Yahweh appearing as Jesus in the Spirit and this figure in heaven. But I think just while explaining it to someone, it would be kind of holding it loose and kind of saying like, "Yeah, it isn't very clear yet."

Tim: It's letting the narrative develop.

Jon: Let the narrative develop it.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: And so, I put this on a tangent about trying to figure out that God was the Father, and I think this totally helps that we're going to jump into about Jesus using that language. Yeah, let the narrative develop it.

Tim: The baptism puts it on your radar of the heavenly figure calling Jesus my Son that I've loved, by means of the Spirit. And then, Jesus walks around doing Yahweh stuff causes controversies, and then he goes and says, something like this: All Things have been handed over to me by my Father, no one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son reveals.

It's as if Jesus is providing this backwards reflection. There's all these people now who have different responses to him.

Jon: Everyone's wondering who He is.

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Tim: So what Jesus is saying here is, "Listen, Son of Man, I am the human one appointed to share in God's own rule over creation, but people don't recognize it. No one knows the Son. But the Father knows me." Baptism story. It's like Jesus is saying, "I know who I am. I'm the real deal." And the fact that all these people don't recognize it, or reject that doesn't affect the reality of his claim. "So no one knows who I am except the Father, and no one knows the Father." This is remarkable.

What he's saying is, nobody knows Yahweh, except how I'm revealing who Yahweh is right now in His claims and in this mission.

Jon: Now, no one knows the Father—

Tim: Excuse me, no one knows the Father. That's exactly right. He's saying, "You can read the Hebrew Scriptures, you get this portrait but there's something happening here that is blowing the ceiling."

Jon: I think what's interesting is like when I think of the categories I had of the Trinity, the Godhead is that God the Father is Yahweh. And so when I look back and I read about God in the Old Testament, that's just God the Father, God the Father.

But what this is saying is like, "No, no one knows God the Father. What you've been experiencing, and what humans have been interacting with and experiencing of God, isn't God the Father." Well, it seems like he's saying, "No one knows the Father." If no one knows the Father, didn't Moses know the Father? Didn't David know the Father?

Tim: They knew the God of Israel as God had revealed Himself to them.

Jon: And He didn't reveal Himself as the Father.

Tim: Correct.

Jon: That's what I'm realizing that this relationship, this experience that Jesus had with God and who God was, Yahweh, as the Father is unique to Jesus. No one else has had that. And no one else can have it unless Jesus reveals it to them.

Tim: Correct. That's the claim that he's making.

Jon: That's the claim that he's making?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So just be clear, is he saying like no one? Like this is a completely new realization of God's identity that no one's experienced before?

Tim: That's the claim that he's making. That his relationship to the Father and the Father's relationship to him, and what that means about God's identity, this God's identity and being and nature is uniquely revealed in the person in the story of himself. And you have shelf space for it—

Jon: When you say uniquely revealed, revealed to us in this narrative?

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Tim: Yeah. In the narrative, it's depicting things that Jesus said, right? Representation from the apostles of how Jesus talked and walked.

Jon: Well, so Jesus uses the language "made known" or anyone know.

Tim: Yeah,

Jon: So he's using "revealed" as synonymous with "know"?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Okay. But it's only revealed, if the Son reveals him?

Tim: Yes, that's right.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So, I and my Father have had this thing going for eternity past as we're going to see as we go on.

Jon: Well, he hasn't said that.

Tim: No, he hasn't. No, he hasn't. The implications of it will—

Jon: Bear fruit later.

Tim: Bear fruit later. So me and my Father - who's God? Me and my Father, we've got this thing going on, and the way that my Father and I have this thing going on, we know about it and now we're sharing it with others. But the only way you're going to learn about it is through me and what I'm doing and saying right now. That's why I'm using the phrase uniquely revealed. This is part of the apostles' claim.

Yes, Jesus as a human, he was born and pooped his diapers, and his brain developed. There was a point at which he became aware of his identity. And so, the only window within the Apostolic testimony in the New Testament is that little narrative in Luke where Jesus is with 12...

Jon: And he stays with them at the tabernacle.

Tim: ...freaks his parents out because he wants to be in the house of his Father. So even at 12, he's got an awareness of some draw to the temple, and that this is a place where I belong. So fascinating.

Jon: It's super fascinating.

Tim: So there's pre-adolescent Jesus—

Jon: Identity is formed in some way.

Tim: Yeah, he's woken up to his identity. And so, that. And then you get these statements. So at some point, he became aware. And then the baptism. So he becomes aware

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of his identity, he fosters that, he cultivates it, certainly through reading perfectly the Hebrew Scriptures, discerning his vocation, his identity. And then once it's worked out in his mind and heart, he says, stuff like this.

And then he sees it as his mission and calling to announce that the kingdom of God is here, and what God's rule over the world is being revealed. It's my Father and I's rule. All things have been given to me. So yeah, I'm with you.

The categories are there where the story is gone but he's (Mind Blown Sound) ...This is a new level of claims being made about identity of God. The claim is when people look to Jesus they are seeing a unique revealing of God's heartbeat and character and purpose.

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Jon: When people in this time period, Second Temple Judaism anticipated Yahweh coming like in Isaiah passage that Mark quotes, do they think of it as him coming as a man or do they think of it as like coming more like as he came in Exodus with the tabernacle and the cloud?

Tim: We only have access to know what people thought through the literature that survived from this time period. And there's a lot of it - Jewish Second Temple literature. And what you see is this a huge diversity. And of course, it was a really diverse culture and religious tradition.

Jon: Like when Jesus' claim has been on the spectrum of possibilities when people who were talking about Yahweh coming or was it completely characteristic?

Tim: I mean all these texts generated hope and expectation. So there's the coming king from line of David and he'll come rock 'em sock 'em kind of stuff.

Jon: But there was no sense that that was the Yahweh himself.

Tim: In most texts, yeah, it's going to be like a David figure, a human King. The Son of Man passage in Daniel 7 generated a lot of speculation. There's a text where...There's a handful of them. One of them is in the popular book called Enoch and The Enoch Tradition - 1 Enoch and 2 Enoch. There, the Son of Man figure is a human figure. It's actually one of the closest expressions to the things that are said about Jesus in another Jewish work.

Jon: Which is no wonder he used that phrase so much.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. But we don't know where the books of Enoch come from and how widespread or influential those were. It's really hard to know. The Jewish scholars down in the Dead Sea Scroll community, they had copies of Enoch. Anyway.

So we're back to here. The God revealed in the gospels is a complex unity that consists of the Father and the Son and the Spirit. Here, and the Father and the Son. And you won't know it by just reading the Hebrew Bible, he's saying. You won't know it by just staring up into the sky. You know it by looking at the story of Jesus' life and death and resurrection. That's his claim here.

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- Jon: Let me ask a clarifying question about this idea of knowing God here. Is it more know about, like know the identity, like have the information of who God is or is it more about having a relationship or an experience or interaction with, kind of knowing?
- Tim: It's more that. The second.
- Jon: So relational knowing?
- Tim: Yeah. From this point forward, Jesus is claiming to really have a relationship with the God of Israel means to have that relationship through Jesus. It involves reconfiguring a whole bunch of mental furniture.
- Jon: This seems like a significant shift, where if you were a second temple Jew and you're thinking about your relationship with Yahweh, you have fact's where Yahweh is your Father, but—
- Tim: The father of your people.
- Jon: The father of your people, talked about as a Father. But Jesus would be coming saying, "There is an aspect of Yahweh's identity that you have not had access to experiencing and knowing relationally, but I do and I want to give that to you. I want you to know God in that way." This is a brand new development.
- Tim: It's a new development. I mean, it's not brand new because again...
- Jon: Yeah, yeah, it's a new development.
- Tim: ...God has had a covenant people that he called his son. So it's not brand new, but it's a new step. It's a new step in...
- Jon: ...progress.
- Tim: Yeah. It feels like a radical claim about, if Jesus is the one who's saying that, to know the God of Israel means to know the God of Israel the way that I do. Which means you know me and the God of Israel as a complex unity.
- Jon: Because I'm because I think about Jesus and the radical claiming being that Jesus is Lord - Jesus is Yahweh. That's the one that's like the radical claim. And it is, but it seems like just as much is the radical claim of the identity of God as Father. Which I've never really thought about those being both radical.
- Tim: I see. Yeah, you are right.
- Jon: So it was like the least radical one is the Spirit as far as the categories.
- Tim: Sure. There's precedent for that.
- Jon: There was a lot more precedent. Both the identity of Jesus as the human exalted one, there's some precedent. Daniel 7 being the biggest one.

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- Tim: Yeah.
- Jon: Okay, cool.
- Tim: Let's take it to the next step.
- Jon: Next step.
- Tim: Here's another fascinating story. It's a famous story that I have found when I point this out to students, or people, it's one of those like, "Oh, I'd never seen that was sitting right there." So this is Jesus' trial before the Jewish religious leaders - the Sanhedrin. Through the whole thing, they're accusing him and he's silent. And they're like, "He said he was going to destroy the temple." They try to charge him as a terrorist and that doesn't work. Anyway.
- So he kept silent. This is Matthew 26:63. "Then the high priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath.'" Put your hand on the Bible. "By the living God."
- Jon: "Swear by Yahweh himself."
- Tim: "That you tell us whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God."
- Jon: "Are you the political leader that's going to help us become a successful nation?"
- Tim: That's right. This is language from Psalm 2. "The anointed king from the line of David who because you represent the people as king, if all the people of Israel are the Son of God, then the king is chief Son of God.
- Jon: It's probably important to notice here then he's not asking, "Are you Yahweh?"
- Tim: That's right.
- Jon: I always read it that way, though, because Son of God to me became synonymous with just incarnate God.
- Tim: Incarnation.
- Jon: Incarnate God.
- Tim: That's right.
- Jon: But he's just saying, "Are you this political leader that Jewish people are hoping for?"
- Tim: So to clarify, what we're to imagine is, in his intentions saying Son of God is different than how Mark began his gospel, "Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God." It's the same exact phrase, but when an apostle says it, he has in mind this whole story.
- Jon: And he's infused that term with more meaning.
- Tim: With more meaning. So the point is, is in the Hebrew Scriptures in Jewish culture, the phrase "Son of God" is a royal title from Psalm 2, linked in Psalm 2, to the

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phrase "anointed king" - Christ or Messiah. But then once Jesus does his whole thing and calls himself the Son, then that phrase "Son of God" takes on its more Trinity type of meaning. And that's how the apostles were using it. And that's how then Paul goes on to use it in his writings and so on. So there's an irony here.

Jon: Do you find that people trip up on this language of Son of God, Son of Man?

Tim: Yeah. It's why I want to do a separate video just on the phrase "Son of God."

Jon: And I think another video would be good on both of those phrases.

Tim: Son of God and Son of Man.

Jon: But for this video, do we incorporate it?

Tim: We have to do something with Father and Son, whether it's just a quick clarification on Son of God was a title given to the family of kings from David's line and it's a royal title.

Jon: Because the quick explainer is, Son of God is a royal title for humans in the line of David. So it doesn't have anything to do with whether you are actual divinity.

Tim: As such. That's right.

Jon: And then, Son of Man, is this unique phrase in Daniel 7 where it is infused with something more.

Tim: Something more. A human that crosses the line to come shares in God's rule over the universe.

Jon: So if someone like...who's this in the story again?

Tim: Caiaphas the high priest.

Jon: Okay. If he says, "Are you the Son of God?" he's thinking of it in terms of the human leader.

Tim: Correct. "Are you claiming that you're the true leader and representative of Israel?"

Jon: But as Jesus identity is formed, the way he thinks of it and the way the apostles begin to understand it, is that being the Son of Man is part of what a person of Yahweh is. What's the language he uses?

Tim: Ironically, in the gospels, for Jesus to say he's the Son of Man is actually a more scandalous claim.

Jon: Yes. He's saying he's Son of God.

Tim: It's actually implied, in their context, way more clearly that he's crossing the line to share in God's own identity.

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Jon: He doesn't think he's just some empowered ruler in the line of David—

Tim: Ironically, Son of God, implies deity less than the phrase Son of Man.

Jon: But then if you circle back within this whole story in mind, and now you use the word Son of God, you've infused it with that same divinity.

Tim: After the Jesus story has gone down, then the Son of God finds new meaning within the Christian movement.

Jon: And how is that connected to when Jesus just says, "I'm the Son" without "Son of"? It's just like in this last one we looked at where he just said—

Tim: Well, there we're hearing the word "Son" in this new key, in this new mode of Jesus'—

Jon: Blending it all?

Tim: That Yahweh, the God of Israel is the Father and the Son who love each other by the Spirit. When Jesus uses the phrase "Son" to describe himself, that's what he's talking about. Here, the phrase Son of God is in the mouth of the high priest who's asking him, "You say you're from the line of David. So is that what you're saying? Say it."

And Jesus response is, "You said it." So we're back to the story. "Tell us whether you're the Messiah, the Son of God." Jesus answered him, "You said it."

Jon: He said it in the form of a question.

Tim: "Nevertheless, I tell you - and this is the key - from now on, from this moment on, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power and coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his robes, and he said, 'This man has blasphemed. What further need we have witnesses? Everybody here you heard his blasphemy.'" And that's case closed.

Jon: He might as well have said like, "I'm more important than you realize and I have all the authority of Yahweh himself from this point on."

Tim: So he's doing two things. He's doing scripture kung-fu. Again, he's taking a phrase from Daniel 7, the Son of Man, and he's taking a phrase from Psalm 110, which we talked about. This is the most quoted text from the Old Testament used by the apostles in the New Testament, and Jesus himself.

And why did the apostles focus on this? Because Jesus Himself—

Jon: Sorry. Is the Psalm 110 the one where David says, "My Lord—

Tim: It's where David tells you a story. "Yahweh said to my master: 'sit at my right hand...'" And so Jesus is identifying himself as a son of David but more than the son of David. He's the human one who was exalted to share in God's own rule.

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Now, this, this is the thing. It's right there. When is Jesus appointed to sit and share in God's rule over the Universe by his words here?

Jon: At this moment.

Tim: From this moment on. "From this moment on, you will see, share in God's rule over the universe, and - notice the last phrase - and here's the thing that you're going to see from this moment uses. You're going to see me coming on the clouds of heaven."

Jon: Which is a Daniel 7 reference.

Tim: It is right from Daniel 7.

Jon: The cloud rider.

Tim: The cloud rider. So this is important because the cloud rider image is going to get connected later on in the New Testament to Jesus' return. Most often, it's depicted in popular Western Christianity as like this is Jesus'—

Jon: Coming from heaven on the clouds back to earth.

Tim: The cloud mobile. That's right. That he's coming down here. Which means we are the one's reinventing that image.

Jon: Yeah. Because in the image, he's riding the clouds up.

Tim: Correct. The riding of the clouds is about Jesus being brought in.

Jon: Ascending to power.

Tim: Ascending to power to participate in God's rule or to embody and be a part of God's rule over the universe. So what he's saying is, the moment you condemn me in this court to death is actually the moment that I'm becoming the king of the universe. From this moment, I'm ascending the clouds.

Just think of how the statement of Jesus is then meant to train you to see every event follows in the trial before Pilate and the beating and the whipping and the mockery. He gets a robe, he gets a scepter, he gets a crown. He gets lifted up and exalted on the cross. It's that upside down thing.

But this phrase is Jesus saying, "Everything that's about to happen is my enthronement to divine rule of the universe." Daniel 7, the Son of Man had just gotten trampled by the beast, right?

Jon: Yeah, that's right.

Tim: Remember the super beast that embodies Babylon and every other kingdom.

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Jon: I'm letting a kingdom trample me in Daniel 7. What happens next? He rides the cloud up to stay at God's right hand and share in His divine authority. And so that's what's going to happen next.

Tim: You got it.

[00:41:09]

Tim: I forget. This was somewhere in the 70s or 60s in Rome, I think it is, a piece of graffiti on like old third century from 200 to 300 building found. It's called the Alexamenos graffiti. It's a picture of a guy named Alexamenos and he's standing before a human figure being crucified, but the human figure has a donkey head. And it says in Latin, "Alexamenos worships his god."

Some Roman Christian named Alexamenos, and he became a worshiper and a follower of Jesus. His friends not only think that he's stupid, they think that it's ridiculous and shameful that he would give his allegiance to a crucified Jewish man. Just think this is a perception that Romans would have.

Jon: So this is them mocking him?

Tim: That's right. So this is a time period before the cross becomes something you can wear. The cross is still shameful. It's like an electric chair or whatever, the needle, whatever they inject. This is such a good image. So what Jesus is doing is taking one of the most shameful, horrifying things about their culture in their time. And he's calling that his divine throne. It's so astounding.

So of course, he doesn't convince anybody in the room. What he does is make them angry.

Jon: And tear their clothes.

Tim: And tear their clothes.

Jon: I've never been so angry I've torn my clothes. Can you imagine?

Tim: I can. Anyhow.

Jon: It's interesting just the thought is that you said that the cross is like the electric chair or the needle or something. It seems like nowadays with the way we execute people, we still try to keep some dignity.

Tim: That's a good point.

Jon: The cross was like the opposite. It was like, "Let's strip you of your dignity while we kill you."

Tim: Correct.

Jon: We don't really have that parallel anymore except for maybe like a beheading or a torture.

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Tim: When those 21 Egyptian Christians were marched out to the coast of Libya or something, and it was recorded the whole thing, they got their head sawn off with machetes, it's more of that. Horrifying. And yet, how would the apostles want us to view that video footage? We don't know this 21 people stories, but what they would have us trust and believe is they were ruling the world, those martyrs. John, the visionary in the Revelation would say, by losing their heads for the sake of their allegiance to Jesus, in reality, they're the ones in charge of that situation. How counterintuitive?

[00:45:31]

Tim: The last text to point out here in this connection is the last sentence of the Gospel of Matthew. It's known as the Great Commission passage. It's literally the last sentence of the Gospel of Matthew. Then the 11 disciples went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus said, "we're going to rendezvous over there." And they see him and they worship him. But there were some who doubted. That's a good line.

So some people were like, "Father, the Son, you are Yahweh." And they're worshipping him, this new revelation of God through Jesus. And then some are like, "I still don't understand what's happening right now." Then Jesus came and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Daniel 7. "So go now. It tells the nations that there's a new king in town and invites them to become my devotees, my followers."

So, go invite everybody to live under my reign and rule, baptizing them, taking them through the key initiation ritual into sonship. Think Jesus, what was the key moment?

Jon: He become a Son.

Tim: He was marked up publicly as God's own Son before others. And so now you have —

Jon: That's why he's maintaining the ritual for that sonship piece?

Tim: At least one layer of its meaning. It's baptism as a way of you undergoing what Jesus underwent when he was publicly identified as the child of God. So baptize them, but do it in the name, singular, the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. There's terrible grammar. But it's a perfect expression of this brand new category that the story is trying to form of the complex unity, that in the name of the God who is Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Which is what the baptism back, in the beginning, was trying to say in narrative form. Jesus sums it up right here. And then, "I'm with you to the very end of the age."

We just toured the gospels from end to end this motif of Daniel 7 and of Jesus as the Son in relation to the Father, loved by the Spirit. It's just right through the whole narrative.

Jon: It's interesting how a lot of it hinges on the baptism.

Tim: Yeah, at the beginning and end. That's right.

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Jon: That seems significant. I'm trying to anchor this on this idea of the experience of God or relationship with God. It seems like the baptism is the ritual that marks that you have an experience. Like you're living a new reality of a new experience with God.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: It was a ritual that marks Jesus' experience with God. It's a ritual that marks Christians new experience with God, and that experience of God is the three in one.

Tim: Baptism is a big deal and it's obviously been, unfortunately, controversial and divisive, I think because the apostles apparently weren't interested in explaining it to the degree that it would solve debates when you put later questions to what this means. That's why there's so much debate about it.

Jon: The debate being?

Tim: Do you have to do it to be a true follower of Jesus? Do you have to do it to be saved? Whatever that's supposed to mean. There's Protestant, Catholic. There's many divides over the meaning of baptism. But what you can easily say that everybody agrees on is that it's really important.

Because Paul the Apostle and Peter both in their letters in the New Testament, they'll look back to this physical symbol, this physical reality that you underwent, and see in it both a symbol but also a reality express that your life, your being is being joined to Jesus' story that you're undergoing what he underwent so that you can become what he is. And then why the language of the spirit is also the word baptism is used.

As you go on as a follower of Jesus, your continued experience of renewed in greater degrees of devotion to Jesus is talked about as a further immersion in the Spirit. It gets into controversial territory, but the core meanings powerful. But you're right, baptism echoes at the beginning and end of the Gospel of Matthew in that way. So there you go.

The Gospels make a clear, I think, when you have eyes to see it, a clear narrative claim about the identity of God as Father, Son, and Spirit. You wouldn't have known it without the Jesus story.

Jon: You wouldn't have known that identity.

Tim: You wouldn't have known. You wouldn't have had language for that, or known to make that claim about God. So it's revealed through Jesus. But at the same time, it's in continuity with everything that's come before.

Jon: It's also really interesting that you wouldn't have known it without Jesus' claim, but also it's hard to see it unless you have read the Old Testament scriptures and wrestled with them to the level that we've kind of been doing. I've read those passages, I've heard them read my entire life and never saw the connection so clearly to God's identity in the Old Testament. And I think that's just kind of a nature

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of not spending as much time in the Hebrew scriptures in the tradition I grew up in. But it's really illuminating. It's cool.

Thanks for listening to this episode of The Bible Project podcast. Next week, we're going to do a question and response episode. So if you have a question as you've been following along in this God series, we'd love to hear it. Record yourself, try to keep it to around 20 seconds, let us know your name and where you're from, and we'll get to as many questions as we can.

Also, if you haven't seen our video on God, we released it two weeks ago. It's up on our YouTube page, youtube.com/thebibleproject, and it's on our website at thebibleproject.com. This episode of the podcast was produced by Dan Gummel, Music by Tae the Producer, and the theme Music is by the band Tents.

We're a crowdfunded nonprofit. We're in Portland, Oregon. All of the things that we make, this podcast, the videos, study notes are free because of the generosity of thousands of people like you crowdfunding this effort. Thanks for being a part of this with us.

Grace: Hi, I'm Grace Bay from Alameda, California. The first time I watched one of The Bible Project videos was when our church was going through the epistles together. It was so cool to see how these epistles have a whole history like to understand what audience they were told to, because I often thought, you know, the Bible was this like overarching vague thing with difficult words and ideas in it. But it was really cool to see that the audience that the epistles are written to people just like me, who are going through struggle that I can very much relate to.

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