

[The Wilderness E9 Transcript]

[Recap of Theme and Setup for Jesus in the Wilderness (0:00—16:59)]

Jon: The wilderness is a place of struggle and turmoil. It's a season that's dangerous and lifeless. The wilderness is the reality that we're not home yet. In the story of the Bible, God meets his people in the wilderness. And in his creative generosity, he uses the tragedy of the wilderness as an opportunity to prepare us for future garden life.

Tim: The whole goal is to transform you through the hardships of the wilderness into the kinds of people who can truly inhabit the garden and not replay the failures of our ancestors.

Jon: This brings us to the story of Jesus. In our last episode, we saw how Jesus in the wilderness was baptized as an act of repentance. And Jesus has nothing to repent of, but he joins us in our repentance. Because on our own, we can't repent and turn to God, but Jesus can. And from Heaven, God declared that Jesus is his divine Son in whom he's well pleased.

Tim: He was marked out in his baptism as the one who's ready. Jesus is called to live out in his own experience the sonship that should have characterized Israel.

Jon: After this, the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tested. Jesus doesn't eat or drink for 40 days, and then the satan shows up with three tests—each test linking back to the ways Israel was tested in the wilderness. And where Israel failed, Jesus succeeds.

Tim: Jesus trusts that God will provide for his daily needs. He also chooses not to force his Father's hand. He also trusts that God will fulfill his destiny as the divine Son to become the ruler of the world.

Jon: Now, Jesus is inviting us to join him so we too can pass the test in the wilderness.

Tim: Jesus wants his followers to see that through baptism, you become a part of the Father-Son-Spirit community. And that now changes my position in these wilderness moments of my life. I might succeed, I might fail, but Jesus becomes the image into which God is making me.

Jon: Today, Tim Mackie and I look at Jesus as our guide and salvation as we travel through the wilderness. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Musical Break (2:21 — 2:26)]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hello, Jon Collins.

Jon: Hello.

Tim: Hello.

Jon: We're talking wilderness.

Tim: Yes, we are. We're in it. We're in the wilderness?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Actually, we're not. We're in the opposite right now.

Jon: You and me?

Tim: Yes.

[Laughter]

Tim: That's exactly right.

Jon: You mean like we're in a climate, like—

Tim: We're in a climate—

Jon: Controlled—

Tim: Little room.

Jon: Room.

[Laughter]

Tim: That we just cooled down—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Because it's a warm summer day—

Jon: I see.

Tim: Here in Portland—

Jon: I see.

Tim: And uhm—

Jon: And you've got a water bottle next to you.

Tim: I've got a bottle full of water.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I had a good breakfast.

Jon: There's some snacks outside.

Tim: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: Totally.

Jon: Yeah. We're good.

Tim: And that's not like the wilderness—

Jon: That's true.

Tim: Anywhere, and especially in the Bible.

Jon: Hmm. But we are in the wilderness of life.

Tim: Oh, okay. But in another sense, we are outside of Eden—

Jon: We are outside of Eden.

Tim: And we're dying out here.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. And there's—

Jon: And I cu—

Tim: A lot of scarcity.

Jon: I cut my finger open last night.

Tim: Yeah, you did. Yeah. trying to manage the growth in your yard—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Right? That's what you told me.

Jon: Totally.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah. Yep.

Tim: So in that sense, we are in the wilderness, a cosmic kind of wilderness. It's very much a wilderness outside past the atmosphere, the little blanket surrounding our planet.

[Laughter]

Tim: And that's a—

Jon: Yep.

Tim: Kind of wilderness out there.

Jon: This is an observation that I think I made recently. I want to make it again just to hear your thoughts on it one more time. The wilderness—you could think of it in terms of different levels of scale. So there's the cosmic wilderness.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: There's the fact that we are on a journey to new creation.

Tim: Mmm. Mmm.

Jon: And so all of this is not as it should be and will be recreated and made new. So we will enter the land of promise, all of creation will—big, epic cosmic wilderness.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: That's multigenerational, centuries-long, millennial-long—

Tim: It's the arc of the universe or the arc of the cosmos.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. It's toward—on the way to the promised land, currently in the wilderness.

Jon: Then you could take a step down from that, and think: Well, what about just my life?

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: My entire life, from a—being born to when I die, is one long journey through the wilderness—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Because my moment in this story is during that time—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Where things are still in the wilderness. So I could think of my life as a wilderness journey.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: But then I think you could take a step down from that and you can just consider just moments of testing.

Tim: Mmm—

Jon: Jus—

Tim: A season of life?

Jon: A season of life.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Or that, that week in life, or that month, or that—yeah, it could be—

Tim: A—

Jon: A year.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

Jon: But it's that moment where just the volume's turned up on the fact that: Man, I am not in control. Things are happening to me. I don't have what I need.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: I feel at the end of myself. This is a moment of wilderness. Because there's sometimes in life where things feel good. And wilderness is not far, but it's not in the thick of it.

Tim: Yeah, sure. Thanks for that scale: cosmic, whole human life, and then individual season or period of time in a human life. And maybe those two about humans you could also scale to a community—

Jon: Ah, yes.

Tim: A community's whole life cycle or a moment in a community's life. So we have this variety of images in the Bible. The wilderness, along with the chaos waters, is a primary image of the pre-creation nothingness, the blank canvas of nothingness. And out of that, God plants a garden. And then when the humans show themselves that they're not ready to be in the garden—that was a whole conversation—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That we had in this series—that their choices and the consequences, they're enforced by God—usher them back into the wilderness. But it's a slow-motion decomposition back into nothingness, that is, a return to the dust. And so these images of: the hostility of the ground towards you produces thorns and thistles. The danger of the hostile creatures out in the wilderness. The jackals, and the ostriches—

[Laughter]

Tim: Lions, and so on.

Jon: Coyotes?

Tim: Yeah. But this big question then of the wilderness of: Is it permanent? And i—it's clear that God's purpose is not that it remain permanent.

Jon: Right.

Tim: He wants to restore people to the life and goodness of the garden. But if they're not ready for it, then what the wilderness then represents is this long or short—however long—transition period of preparation—

Jon: Yeah, preparation.

Tim: Of testing. But the whole goal is to transform you through the hardships of the wilderness into the kinds of people who can truly inhabit the garden and not replay the failures of our ancestors.

Jon: Is that the main idea? Th—

Tim: Well, you had a line earlier on—I mean, this is now a while ago—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Since we started.

[Laughter]

Tim: But it's about: We're not ready—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: To be in the garden.

Jon: There's a direct route to the garden, but—

Tim: That's right.

Jon: We're not ready.

Tim: We're not ready for it. And you can show that you're not ready to be in the garden while you're in the garden—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Or you can show you're not ready to enter into the garden while you're undergoing the hardship of the wilderness. And both of those paradigms get explored in the biblical story.

Jon: Yeah. And so I think through these three levels, really quick, I—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: We want to get into Jesus—

Tim: Yeah, cosmic—

Jon: Yeah, let's start down from the bottom, though, because—

Tim: Oh, okay.

Jon: I can understand that there's seasons in life where maybe I'm not ready to receive the good gift that—whatever that is. God has something in store for me and my family or my community, and we're just not ready yet. And there's going to be a, a season. But then there's going to be a season of like: We're ready. We're doing it. And you can kind of feel that in the life cycle of a community.

Tim: Yeah. I can think of moments just from my own life where there's an experience that I ended up having—I don't know, whatever—in my 30s, and then I try to think, like: Ooh, how would my 22-year-old self have experienced this? And I've found myself, when retelling things like that in life—I'll be saying: I—man, I wouldn't have been ready for that.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I wouldn't have even known what to do with that opportunity or—

Jon: Right.

Tim: It probably would have ruined me—

Jon: Yeah. Y—

Tim: If I hadn't had these other experiences that came in between.

Jon: And, and that's an insight that landed for me, which was: When you're in abundance, when you're in the land of promise, in that good season, and you're not prepared to know that every good gift comes from God and this isn't because of you, like, you're setting yourself up for failure.

Tim: Yeah. Totally.

Jon: You—you got—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: To be ready.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But then, at a—when you get to a cosmic level, this is where it starts to spin my brain a little bit. Like in what sense—

Tim: Yeah: “is the cosmos not ready?”

Jon: Is the cosmos not ready?

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And that's a too big of a question probably for—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Us to answer.

Tim: Yeah. The wilderness is primarily focused on the human drama—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The human-divine partnership drama. That's really at the core of the biblical story, which has huge implications for the created environment that humans inhabit. But there's this intimate connection between the status of God's partners, human partners, and the well-being and the status or the future of our created environment. So when Paul talks about the liberation of creation from slavery to decay and ruin, its freedom is bound up with the freedom of, uh, the human images of God and their resurrection from the dead, which will coincide with the renewal of creation. So if the renewal is connected —

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Then also somehow the—I mean, in—well, gosh. How many rabbit holes do we want to go down—

[Laughter]

Tim: Right now?

[Laughter]

Jon: I don't know.

Tim: We are in a season both cosmically—where the energy and order that creates these islands of life—right now we know of one of them. We're on it—

Jon: Oh—

Tim: The flying, the flying space—

Jon: Yeah, yeah.

Tim: Rock.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Right?

[Laughter]

Jon: Okay.

Tim: But you know, what biological life is in the words of Michael Green are entropy way stations.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We're just slowing down the decomposition of matter in these little deposits of order called our bodies, and biological life, and cell—right?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But it's all—

Jon: You're talking about the second law of thermodynamics?

Tim: Yeah, it's—in—which is—

Jon: We're all—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Dying.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: It's all going to get more and more disorganized.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And for a moment, we're experiencing a lot of order, but that's the entropy way station. It's the moment—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Of—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Let's create a lot of order, but then actually this is all going to—

Tim: Yeah. Instead of all my—

Jon: Disintegrate.

Tim: Atoms just, yeah, never integrating, they integrate into these forms. Right?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And uh—I'm sorry.

[Laughter]

Jon: This got really, yeah—

[Laughter]

Jon: Geeky.

Tim: Yeah, but I guess the point is that's our modern way of talking about God's lament about the humans outside in the wilderness, outside of Eden, which is: From dust you came, and now, because of your folly, to dust you will r—the dust will reclaim you. The wilderness dust will suck you back in.

Jon: So the land of promise ultimately is creation in which we don't have to disintegrate back into the dust?

Tim: Yeah, where God will sustain the life and order of what he's made in a way that's connected to his infinite power and love.

Jon: And we're not ready for that.

Tim: We're—yes, it's too much. That's what God says. "And now, the human's become like one of us, knowing good and bad ... and so that they don't send out their hand—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "And take also from the tree of life and eat it and live forever—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Dot, dot, dot.

Jon: They're not ready.

Tim: "And he banished them from the garden."

Jon: This feels so startling and significant to me that I just want to think about it. We're not ready for Heaven.

Tim: Hmm, on Earth.

Jon: Yeah, on Earth.

[Laughter]

Tim: That is, the new creation. Yeah.

Jon: But then also, Jesus says it's here. It's happening.

Tim: Yeah, that's the surprise gift of the arrival of God's kingdom.

Jon: And so we have to—

Tim: And we're not ready for that.

Jon: We're not even ready for that.

Tim: I mean, gosh, Jesus' followers clearly—

[Laughter]

Tim: Haven't been ready for that. For 2,000 years, we've been, like, making a mess of it.

Jon: Man, that frame—

Tim: Not all the time.

Jon: Brings so much sense—well, so much intrigue and so much sense. We're not ready. We're not ready for new creation. We're not even ready for the new creation acts that God's doing now in our lives.

[Laughter]

Jon: We're just not ready.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah. What would it take to be ready?

Jon: What does it take to be ready?

Tim: What does it take to be ready?

Jon: Okay, we're going to get into talking about Jesus here.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And Jesus is going to go into the wilderness—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And he's going to pass the test.

Tim: Yeah, after he was marked out in his baptism as the one who's ready.

Jon: He's the one who's ready.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then he's going to show us: What does it look like to be in the wilderness and for the wilderness to not push you further away from—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: God—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But actually create that union with God?

Tim: That's exactly right.

Jon: Because the wilderness—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Is an opportunity to learn to trust God, a—listen to his voice, and be prepared to be the kind of people who can—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Enter a land of promise.

Tim: Yeah, okay. Thank you. After our little cosmological—

[Laughter]

Tim: Rabbit hole, you're bringing us back. We've been tracing in this series all the different—if the meaning of the wilderness is what we talked about in a not very succinct way—

Jon: To get ready?

[Laughter]

Tim: How do people end up in the wilderness? We've been tracing that—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: There's all these case studies: through their own folly—

Jon: Right.

Tim: Adam and Eve. Abraham and Sarah's folly pushed someone else into the wilderness—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Hagar. Pharaoh's fear and murderous folly—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Creates—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Actually a, a wilderness type environment in the garden of Egypt. And God confronts him and liberates them. And then God leads the freed people out into the wilderness to get them ready.

Jon: Yeah. How do we end up in the wilderness? It's our folly or someone else's folly.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But why would God lead us into the wilderness?

Tim: Oh, yeah. Okay.

Jon: Why would God allow us to stay in the wilderness?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Why wouldn't God just say—

Tim: Take us—

Jon: “Hey—”

Tim: The direct route.

Jon: The direct route.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. And that was that little—

Jon: “Hey, I've got a direct route.”

Tim: Paragraph in Exodus 13 that was—I love it. I was ready to, like, quickly discuss that paragraph, and you were like: Wait a minute—

[Laughter]

Tim: There's something here for me.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And it's this right here.

Jon: Yes.

Tim: Why not the direct route?

Jon: Why not the direct route? And then you think: Cool, this is a meditation about how the wilderness is supposed to prepare me for the land of promise. But what's so frustrating is that it doesn't have that effect.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Yep. In the Hebrew Bible, all these wilderness stories usually end poorly for the people involved.

[Laughter]

Jon: And so there's all these—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Stories, and we went through them. And in those stories, we get lines that Jesus is going to quote here—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: As he passes the test.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: And so let's get into it.

Tim: Great.

Jon: But I think the big meta question for me—and maybe we don't answer it this episode, but—which is like: Then what is the purpose of the wilderness for my life, just to teach me that I'm not ready? Or is it really to make me ready? And in what way can it help me get ready—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: If these stories of, like, God's people is that it doesn't?

Tim: Or it didn't. Yeah.

Jon: Or it didn't.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Great. That's a great setup. In this last conversation, we looked at John the Baptist in the wilderness and then the baptism of Jesus. We're going to look now at Jesus' own wilderness sojourn. I just want to highlight one last thing in the baptism that's an important, like, background for the wilderness test. We kind of talked about it, but since we had this conversation, I wanted to make sure that we really landed on it.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Because these two stories, Jesus' baptism and the wilderness, are linked together by some really key ideas. I just want to make those explicit. So first to the baptism, then to the wilderness.

[Musical Break (16:31 — 16:59)]

[Final Thoughts on Baptism and Intro to Wilderness Tests (16:59 — 39:29)]

Tim: So recall in Matthew's account of the baptism that we read in Matthew chapter three, Matthew's version is the only one where he preserves the memory of John the Baptizer, John the Immerser, preventing Jesus, saying, like, "No, no, no, no." Like, "You don't need to get purified through these waters of repentance. I need to by you."

[Laughter]

Tim: And Jesus says, "No, no, no. This is appropriate in order to fulfill all doing right." So we talked about this. S—

Jon: "Fulfill all righteousness."

Tim: Yeah, "to fulfill all righteousness." So Israel has failed to do right by God throughout its covenant history.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That's the background of this little line.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And Jesus is a—going to say later: I'm here to fulfill the Torah and the Prophets—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Which is all about God's covenant partnership with Israel that's itself enfolded within God's partnership with all of humanity. So Jesus is here to fulfill doing right by God in a way that his people have not. That's why John's calling everybody to come—Israelites to come, repent, and turn around at the Jordan where they first entered the land under Joshua. This is what we talked about. So here Jesus is identifying himself by going through these waters of saying “we're sorry” to God. He's identifying himself with the failure of his people to do right by God. But then the moment he identifies himself with Israel's failure, his Father cracks open the skies, and you're like, “His Father?” Yes, that's what Matthew one and two were all about, that he is conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. He is the divine Son of God become human. And that true identity of Jesus that's already true of him, but that we don't know how many people Mary ever shared this with—it's now becomes like a public announcement. And so the Spirit of God descends in the form of the dove. And you have this amazing proto-Trinity image right here of the Father conveying his love and message of love to the Son through the person of the Spirit. And so Jesus is marked out as “my Son”—that's what God says—“My beloved one, in him I have delight.” So we are already learning that Jesus is the divine Son become human. But yet he's willing to set aside that divine cosmic authority and identify himself with corruptible, like, fickle, failed humans and their projects.

Jon: Yeah. There's no reason he had to do the baptism.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: And then there's no reason he has to go into the wilderness to be tested.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: It—

Tim: That's right.

Jon: Like—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: He's not the kind of person who needs wilderness or—

Tim: Y—

Jon: Sh—should be in the wilderness.

Tim: Yeah. And this moment with John is then highlighting, like, “You don't belong in these waters.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And so that theme right there—“If, if you are the divine Son become human—”

Jon: He doesn't need to get ready.

Tim: He doesn't need to get ready. But yet Jesus is like, "No, no, no. I need to go through the experience that my family—"

Jon: "In order—"

Tim: "Has gone through to get ready."

Jon: "To fill full all—"

Tim: "All doing right."

Jon: "The rightness."

Tim: So in other words, what Jesus is about to go through in the wilderness is also a continuing—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Of what he was already—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Beginning as he stepped into those waters. He didn't need to, but he is doing it to identify with, to do right by—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The people to whom God has made covenant.

Jon: And is the punchline then he's doing it not just to identify with us so that we—but we can also identify with him—

Tim: Mhm. Yes.

Jon: And that we can then go—

Tim: Exactly—

Jon: Through it—

Tim: Totally.

Jon: As well?

Tim: You got it.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: You got it. And so his identity as the Son is—there's this tension between then his identity with his covenant human partners.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Somehow, he's the divine covenant initiator—

[Laughter]

Tim: And he's the human covenant receiver in one person. That's what's—this narrative is trying to explore. And the wilderness story is exploring that too. Okay, onto the wilderness. I'll let you read. This is Matthew 4:1-4. It's the first test.

Jon: "Then Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tested by the slanderer."

Tim: Hmm. "The devil" is often how it's translated—

Jon: Okay, that's right.

Tim: In our English transla— *Diab*—

Jon: The Devil—

Tim: *Diabolos*.

Jon: *Diabolos* means the slanderer?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Just like the satan doesn't mean—

Tim: Oh.

Jon: It's not a name.

Tim: Right.

Jon: It means "the adversary—"

Tim: Yep. Yep.

Jon: Devil means slanderer.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Okay. "And having fasted 40 days and 40 nights—"he's been out there for a while —"afterwards, he was hungry. And approaching, the tester said to him—"

Tim: So that's a new title for the slanderer. And that's a kind of a puzzle because you were just told Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tested. So in a way—

Jon: Is the Spirit testing him?

Tim: The s—the Spirit of the Father sent to the Son is one initiating this test or putting Jesus in the environment where he will be tested—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But then there's the one doing the testing. That's very interesting. Something happening here.

Jon: Yeah. Okay. God will allow you into the wilderness. But it doesn't mean every voice you encounter there—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And every, like, bad thing is like—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: God doing it. It's—there, there could be—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Another energy there.

Tim: Yeah. And notice where the voice of the tester focuses.

Jon: Okay. "So the tester said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, speak so that these stones become loaves of bread.'"

Tim: Mmm.

Jon: Okay. "If you really are the Son of God," meaning—and what does that mean, "You're the Son of God"? This is the divine, like—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: This is the—

Tim: So that's what the—literally the I—previous paragraph—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "You are my Son."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "I love you. In you I have delight."

Jon: Mhm. We just haven't done the Son of God theme video yet.

Tim: Yeah. Oh, sure. Yeah. We will.

Jon: It means—

Tim: Mmm. Well—

[Laughter]

Tim: Well, well—

Jon: Can you summarize te—what would be 10 hours of conversation—

[Laughter]

Jon: In just one sentence—

Tim: Uhm—

Jon: Please?

Tim: It means a lot of things—

Jon: Okay, it means a lot of things.

Tim: Because it is the title that is used for individuals, it's used for groups of people, it's used for spiritual beings, and it's used for one—

Jon: Wow.

Tim: Unique spiritual being who is one with the divine Father. All those meanings are in the same Bible—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: S—and sorting out how they relate to each other is—

Jon: Okay—

Tim: What we're going to look at.

Jon: And which meaning is the tester, the slanderer here?

Tim: Well, that final one. But also echoing the fact that the people of Israel, God's covenant partners, are—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Also called the Son of God—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: In the Old Testament.

Jon: But if you're the one who is going to bring them into that because of your kind of special status—

Tim: "If you are the beloved Son—"

Jon: Mmm. Yeah.

Tim: "A Father would not withhold—"

Jon: Yeah, "You've—you haven't eaten for 40 days."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Like: "Why don't you create a meal for yourself?"

Tim: Yeah. In a way, what the tester is saying here is like what John said just in the previous paragraph. "This is not appropriate for you to be here in a place that's usually reserved—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "For people who make stupid decisions and end up in the wilderness because—"

Jon: "You don't need the baptism."

Tim: "You don't need to go through the waters of repentance. What are you—"

Jon: "You don't—"and then, "You don't need to fast. What are you learning from fasting?"

Tim: Right. "You're—"

Jon: Like—

Tim: "The Son of God."

Jon: Yeah. "Have a feast."

Tim: "You're—"

Jon: “For goodness’ sakes—”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: “Make some bread.”

[Laughter]

Tim: “If your words spun the cosmos into being—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “What are you doing out here starving?”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “That makes no sense at all. It’s not appropriate.” Th—right? That’s what John says to—

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah—

Tim: Him.

Jon: That’s really fascinating.

Tim: Isn’t—yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This is—no, this is super important.

Jon: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tim: Let’s go back. John said, “I need to be immersed by you.” So th—thinking of this analogy—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Between the baptism and the wilderness—

Jon: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Tim: This would be like John saying, “I should be out here starving—”

Jon: “I should—”

Tim: “Because of—”

Jon: “Be—”

Tim “The—”

Jon: “Fasting—”

Tim: “The stupid decisions I’ve made.”

Jon: “You make some bread—”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: “Out of rocks.”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Got it.

Tim: “If you are the beloved, delighted-in Son, divine Son of the divine Father, what on earth are you doing out here?”

Jon: So this is, this is a test for Jesus because he is meant to go through with us. So it wouldn’t be wrong for Jesus to do a miracle to make some bread.

Tim: No. In fact, he’s going to do it—

Jon: He’s going to do it.

Tim: A couple of times over later on in this same Gospel account. Yeah.

Jon: But he’s in the wilderness for a purpose—you’re connecting it to the baptism—to fulfill all—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: The righteousness, the doing right.

Tim: Filling full—yeah.

Jon: The right stuff that we are meant to do.

Tim: There’s some way to do right by God that has yet to be fulfilled—

Jon: Yeah, s—

Tim: By this family.

Jon: And so he's in the wilderness filling it full, and the satan or—sorry, the slanderer—

[Laughter]

Jon: Comes out and says, like, “What are you doing?”

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: “You don't need to do it.”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Okay, and—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That's the test.

Tim: That's right. Yeah, that's the test. So—a couple thoughts. One, I've learned a lot about this story from lots of people over the years. One was actually someone—a scholar I quoted from in our study on The Mountain. Terence Donaldson published an academic work many years ago about the mountain theme in the Gospel of Matthew. And so he focuses on the third test that's to come, which takes place on a mountain. But the first one's in the wilderness. Uh, he puts it this way. He says, “The heart of the temptation is found in this attempt to induce Jesus to compel him to be unfaithful to the pattern of sonship that is conceived of in terms of the relationship between the ideal Israel and the divine Father.” So Jesus is an Israelite. I'm—this is me now interrupting.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Jesus is an Israelite born into the Israelite family, and he is offering himself in terms of the ideal fulfilled version of what Israel could have been in the wilderness. Okay. So he, he continues, “This is a temptation away from sonship. Jesus is called to live out in his own experience the sonship that should have characterized Israel and the relationship with God that involves, one, dependence on him for provision of need, two” —he's outlining the three tests here.

Jon: Mmm, okay.

Tim: So the first one is dependence. This is about food.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The second one is about trust in God's presence and protection without the need to demonstrate it—"Throw yourself off the temple." And third, the acceptance of sovereignty, but only on the Father's terms. That is the: "Bow down and worship me," the tempter says, "and I'll give you rule over the nations." So this first one is about dependence on God to give you what you need in God's time and way.

Jon: And this is the one we've been focusing on, is—

Tim: In the wilderness.

Jon: In the wilderness, God's preparing us to believe I will get what I need. Even when I run into what is a plague, God will heal.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Uhm, there will be enough. I can learn to just trust and listen to God's instruction and find the good—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: In the wilderness.

Tim: Yeah. Think of the story—it's one—Adam and Eve at the tree. There it's: We're surrounded by food, but there's one tree—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That seems to be the key to something that I'm going to need—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Which is wisdom. And why would God withhold that?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So it's really not about: Will God provide me food? Will God provide me wisdom to transcend my, like—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Dependence on him for food, to graduate?

Jon: And wisdom will help me know how to deal with food—

Tim: Mhm. And a whole lot more.

[Laughter]

Jon: And a whole lot more.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah, with Abraham and Sarah, it's: Will God provide us the child—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That he promised us? For Pharaoh, it's: Will God provide order and stability and abundance in my community when there's this thriving immigrant community that intimidates me? That's Pharaoh's—right?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: For David: Will God protect my honor in this long period of waiting to become the king of Israel, especially when there's a guy named Malicious Idiot who—

[Laughter]

Tim: Is dishonoring me? Right? So it—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's about: What do I think that I need—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And how am I going to get that?

Jon: Yeah. It's good to connect it to that. It's also good for me to remember that food insecurity is—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: A big cause of a lot of—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Poor decisions that we make and a lot of strife. Not in my life. I just haven't had to deal with that. But throughout human history, that has been a big thing.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: But this is much more than just food—but it's a way in. So "Make these stones into bread," and then—so Jesus responds, "It has been written, not by bread alone does humanity live, but by every word that comes out of God's mouth."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "Out from God's mouth."

Tim: Yeah. "Out from—"so there's a word that God speaks and that's actually the true—

Jon: That's the nourishment I need.

Tim: Life of humanity.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Now he's putting this in a stark way. Well, actually, these aren't even his words. He's quoting right from the Torah.

Jon: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: But the contrast isn't to say that bread doesn't keep our bodies alive. Of course it does. But it's saying by this contrast, there is—underneath the bread, there's a deeper source of life that even makes the bread that we live by. Because you eat bread, and then you get hungry again.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Poop it out.

Jon: Right.

Tim: It gives you energy for a time. But what is it that sustains the human life throughout the whole of the human life and even beyond what bread is capable of producing?

Jon: What sustains my life? What even makes bread possible in the first place?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then it's that thing, it's the word of God—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That then not only is sustaining life and making life possible, but is the word that gives instruction—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Of: How do I interact with all of this?

Tim: Yes. So Jesus is quoting from Moses' words to Israel from Deuteronomy chapter eight. We spent a whole episode—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Reading this very chapter of the Torah and meditating on it. The word of God is what in the Torah weaves the whole cosmos into being with all the trees and the flowering fruit and so on. And so somehow this hunger to too quickly meet his own needs, physical needs in his own time and in his own way, would be—because remember he was led here by the Spirit—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That the Father sent. So at the baptism, Father communicated love. Then Jesus becomes aware through the Spirit of the Father that there is—"I'm going to leave that—a little river oasis and go out into the desert. And now it's a time to be without and to trust." And so for Jesus to meet his own needs would be the equivalent of the taking of the fruit.

Jon: Yeah—

Tim: In—

Jon: Which is interesting—

Tim: In the garden.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But now he's in the opposite of a garden. So he's like a new Adam and Eve in the sense that—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He's just in the opposite of a garden, and this is about withholding food instead of taking food.

Jon: Right. Jesus could go the direct route. God leads him into the wilderness. He is there to identify with us so that we can learn to identify with him. That's his role.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And to decide: Yeah, I guess I'm not going to do it, I'm just going to bypass this—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Would be taking what's good on terms that's not the Father's terms.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: And so then he quotes from the story in the Torah—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Where Israel is in the wilderness—

Tim: 40 years.

Jon: For 40 years, like he's in the wilderness for 40 days, and they are given bread from the sky. And the point of that story is: Just gather what you need today. I'm going to prepare you to be the kind of people who could just trust me day by day.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then that's the context for this line?

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. Literally the words before Jesus quotes from them—this is Deuteronomy eight, verse three—this is Moses saying to Israel, “Our God, he humbled you, allowing you to go hungry, then feeding you with manna—which neither you nor your fathers really knew what that even was—in order to teach you that a human doesn't live by bread alone.”

Jon: So that whole thing of being in the wilderness and having a lack and then having God show up and provide is to teach you that it's God that provides, it's not—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: The bread?

Tim: Yeah. That's right. Everything in creation, in this way of seeing the world, that we think is going to provide security and sustain our existence—it's a sign. It's a symbol. It's not actually really the thing that's keeping you alive.

[Laughter]

Tim: You think that it i—we think—we're so easily deceived—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Into taking the sign for the reality.

Jon: Yeah—

Tim: And we attach—

Jon: Because—

Tim: Ourselves to these things that we think are the thing that sustains us.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And the only way, apparently, to retrain a human is for you to go without the thing that you think you need, which will often lead you to a great desperation—even think you're going to die.

Jon: Yeah. Fasting.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: That just made me think, maybe fasting is such an important spiritual discipline so that you can practice in kind of like a—

Tim: Yeah, yeah, it's like training wheels.

Jon: Training wheels—

[Laughter]

Jon: Because if you get to learn it through just the practice of, like, looking at a loaf of bread and—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Being like, I think this is what I need today to keep me alive—

Tim: It's not true.

Jon: It's not true. I need something way more, and I'm going to just use this day or week or whatever to—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Just do that. Then maybe you won't need that—

[Laughter]

Jon: Season of wilderness in the future.

[Laughter]

Tim: M—yeah. I wish it worked that simply.

Jon: Yeah, I wish it was that simple.

Tim: Uhm, but this is the wisdom of the spiritual formation traditions that go back—deep roots in early Christian history and then Jewish history. I bring the test on myself voluntarily—

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: As a way of partnering with God's process of maturing me for the other times of wilderness that I—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Don't bring on, you know, myself.

Jon: You know, what's interesting is, uh, the Stoics—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Do a similar thing, but they come to a completely different conclusion.

Tim: Oh, they're like: You're sufficient to make it through more than you think.

Jon: Y—yeah. Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The end meditation isn't: Wow—thankful for the God of the universe as a good Father who wants to take care of me.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The S—

Tim: Sure.

Jon: For the Stoics, is like, yeah, I could handle that.

Tim: You know, yeah, I heard this fascinating radio piece about someone here in our city who does cold plunging—

[Laughter]

Tim: In the winter.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Uhm, and they were talking about how they went through a terrible season of life—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Uhm, a divorce, career collapsing—it all just—life caved in in the course of a year. And they began cold plunging as a way of teaching themselves how to—

Jon: Come into their limits?

Tim: Yeah. And it's been a really healing—and so I know this because a friend of mine is neighbors with this person—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: And started doing it with them.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And it's been transformative for my friend who follows Jesus.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And so we had this conversation about how my friend's discovered the reasons for doing it are totally different, really, in the way that we're talking about right—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Now.

Jon: Yeah, yeah.

Tim: But they are both doing it as a part of this group of people who do it regularly. Isn't that interesting?

Jon: That's very fascinating.

Tim: Yeah. So—and maybe one other layer here is the Israel called to be God's covenant partners on behalf of all humanity. And now here's the Son of God becoming

human to be the faithful Israelite on behalf of Israel and on behalf of all humanity. So in a way, I think that's why we're hearing echoes of both the garden of Eden, of a food test, but it's inverted because it's in the wilder—you know? But then also he's replaying the story of Israel.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's like he's filling full both the human story and the Israel story. And I suppose you would blow it out even to the cosmic story.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Though this is not the only test. There's two more.

Jon: This—but this is the one that happens in the wilderness.

Tim: This is the one specifically located in the wilderness. Mhm.

Jon: Although the rest are in the wilderness, they just, like, are also somewhere else.

[Laughter]

Tim: Well, kind of, yeah. His—I guess you'd say his body stays in the wilderness—

[Laughter]

Tim: But his consciousness soars all over the place.

[Laughter]

Jon: Did you want to go through the rest of them?

Tim: Uhm, well, let's at least touch on them because, like good Jewish meditation literature, Matthew's composed these three so that they all—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Kind of hyperlink and work together.

[Musical Break (39:01—39:29)]

[Jesus' Wilderness Tests (39:29—1:01:46)]

Tim: “So the second is the slanderer—”we’re back to calling—the slanderer—“took him to the holy city.”

Jon: Jerusalem?

Tim: Yep, apparently. That’s what it’s often called. “And stationed him at the upper tip of the temple.” So this could refer to a couple places. It could refer to the temple proper itself at the center. The upper tip, the *pterygion*, could refer to a really high, like, kind of like, arch—

Jon: At the top of it?

Tim: Point. Mhm. It could also technically refer—this word is used—I have this in the notes—but the word could technically refer to the temple precinct, at which case, what do you say, the southeast corner of the pillared colonnade where Jesus like runs out the money changers later—the tip of that building, the roof, would have been overlooking not just the building, but the building was up against a corner that was a sheer drop into the Valley of Kidron.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: And that would have been a really far drop, too.

Jon: Oh, you’re—so you’re talking about the courtyards had the little barrier?

Tim: The courtyard had a barrier wall, and there’s a—

Jon: And—

Tim: Building on one of those corners.

Jon: I see. And that would have been the farthest drop, and it would have felt like the highest spot?

Tim: Exactly right.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So it could refer to either. The point is is that he's positioned at a place where he's overseeing the temple precinct, which is another way of thinking about the Heaven on Earth spot, the temple.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This is all garden imagery there. And the slanderer says to him, once again, "If you are the Son of God—"so it's another disconnect.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But here it's going to be a little different. "If you are the Son of God, you could throw yourself down, which would be: intentionally put your life in danger. And if you were to do that—"

Jon: Which is what the wilderness is doing.

Tim: Ooh, yeah. Except there he's led by the Spirit.

Jon: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tim: So the Father puts him in—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: To food—

Jon: So it's not—

Tim: Insecurity.

Jon: It's not necessarily wrong to be in a place where you're—

Tim: Oh—

Jon: In more danger.

Tim: That's right. Where you're exposed to danger and risk.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. But—and I guess the question is: What's the difference?

Jon: Yeah. What's the difference?

Tim: If you're led by the Spirit, if you find yourself in an environment where all of a sudden your dependence on God is being tested and you didn't bring it on yourself—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I think that's the food—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And the bread. Here it's: Why don't you intentionally put yourself in a position so that God has to rescue you? "Because it has been written—"the slanderer quotes from the Hebrew Bible—"He," that is the Father, God, "has commanded his messengers concerning you—"so the slanderer reads this psalm, which is what we call Psalm 91, as being about the messianic Son of God being assigned protectors, God's—

Jon: Messengers.

Tim: Angelic messengers. "And they," that is the angelic messengers, "will lift you up in their hands so that you won't even strike your foot against the stone."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So "If you're the Son of God, God's going to protect your life no matter what."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "He's not going to let his darling—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "Die."

Jon: "So prove it."

Tim: "So you were actually in a position of power over your Father."

Jon: Oh.

Tim: "Because he's guaranteed your protection, right?"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Reads that right there—"in your, in your Bible."

Jon: Oh, interesting.

Tim: "So if your Father is depriving you of food, that's not befitting for the status of—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "The Son of God."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And then here it's, "If you are the Son of God, your Father is obligated to rescue you whether h—your Father initiates it," like in what just happened, "or whether you put him to the test."

Jon: Hmm. Put him to the test.

Tim: And that's what Jesus sees here. Jesus said to him, "Again, it has been written, 'You will not test the Lord your God.'"

Jon: And this is a quote from the water narrative, right—

Tim: Yes. Yeah.

Jon: Where they're just grumbling. They're just complaining. And they're like, Moses, you wanted to kill us out here, and that's why there's no water.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then God says, "Why are you testing me?"

Tim: Yeah. They're trying to force God's hand to supply them water. Yeah, so he's alluding to the Israelites grumbling against Moses and God, but then also beginning to get violent and threaten Moses.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like, "We'll go back to Egypt then. We'll solve this—"

Jon: We're going to force your hand.

Tim: "Solve this ourselves, then."

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: "If you're not going to give us what we want in the time that we want it—"

Jon: I see.

Tim: "Then we're going to take matters into our own hands here." And so here it's about forcing your Father's hand to fulfill his promise. Maybe it's sort of like when somebody says they're going to do something for you, you're kind of put in an interesting position, because what if they—

Jon: What if they forget?

Tim: What if they forget? You have to trust. That's what it is.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: You have to trust that they're going to do it.

Jon: So for Jesus, it's: God will protect me. I don't have to worry about my life. But the slanderer is saying: Why don't you kind of make sure or prove it—or maybe not just even make sure, but just to show everyone else how much power you actually have?

Tim: Right. Yes. Yeah. Totally. Now, there's an interesting little connection forward, like a forward hyperlink—and this happens a lot in Matthew where there'll be a scene earlier in Matthew's Gospel account that has wording that connects forward to something later. And Matthias Konradt, a German New Testament scholar who I've learned a lot from—Gospel of Matthew, he notes that this links forward to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, which has all these actually important hyperlinks back to the wilderness story in more ways than one. But when Peter tries to, you know, pull out a sword and prevent Jesus from getting arrested, and he cuts that guy's ear off, what he says to Peter is, "Don't you know, I could summon legions of angelic messengers—"it's the same word—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: Angels, messengers, "at this moment." But then he says, "No, but so that the scriptures have to be fulfilled." And he tells Peter to chill out. So there's a moment where he could actually summon these angelic messengers to save him. You could walk into the most dangerous, like, room in your city full of dangerous people, and you know that you're covered, but you choose not to flex. I don't know.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He's choosing not to flex. This is an interesting meditation, also, to think about Israel in the wilderness, but then also Adam and Eve.

Jon: Because Israel in the wilderness does not feel like they actually—

Tim: Oh.

Jon: Have the power.

Tim: They're not in a position of power.

Jon: They're not in a position of power.

Tim: That's right. That's right. Yeah.

Jon: Like, Jesus knows: Yeah, I can summon a bunch of—I know. I know.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: There is seemingly this invitation from Jesus to think of ourselves that way, too, right? "Don't you know that God loves you and he will give you good things—"

Tim: Oh yeah, I was thinking—

Jon: “And he will protect you?”

Tim: Yeah, I was thinking Paul writing to the Corinthians will say, “Don’t you know that you are going to rule the world?”

Jon: Okay, right.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah. So there’s like—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: We’re supposed to actually have this psyche of Jesus—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Like—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah, God will protect me.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: I have authority.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And then what do you do with that? And there’s something instructive here. But the lived experience that we have generally—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Is very different.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah, totally. Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So that's a nice lead into the third test, where the slanderer takes Jesus to a high mountain in—

Jon: I hope he took him to a cool one, like, uhm—

[Laughter]

Jon: What are those two up north? Some—

[Laughter]

Jon: The big ones.

Tim: Yeah. Mount Hermon.

Jon: Mount Hermon.

Tim: Is the one up—it's right on the border, modern-day border, of Israel and Syria, and —

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Up there. Yeah—

Jon: Take him up there.

Tim: But notice, he took him up to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world.

Jon: It's a very high mountain.

Tim: So it's the cosmic mountain.

Jon: It's the cosmic mountain.

Tim: It's the cosmic mountain.

Jon: So he took him to the coolest mountain—

[Laughter]

Jon: The cosmic mountain.

Tim: Yeah, higher than Everest. It's got to be. And said to him, "All of these things I will give to you if falling down you bow down to me." That's the line.

Jon: "I'll give you all of these kingdoms."

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And there's a little assumption underneath this, a little narrative development.

Jon: "These belong to me"?

Tim: Yeah. What does that mean?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: They don't belong to the slanderer.

Jon: That was our Redemption episode.

Tim: Or do they?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Or do they kind of?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Or is it: They belong to him because only as long as humans allow the kingdoms to belong to the slanderer do they belong. But there is this acknowledgement in the gospels, especially—Jesus calls the slanderer the ruler of this cosmos in the Gospel of John. That's what Jesus calls the *satan*. So apparently, a—holding power in this cosmos requires giving allegiance to this one. And what Jesus says is, "*hypage satana*." And we did talk about this—actually, man, our deepest dive into it was in the Lord's Prayer conversations about The Test. "Don't lead us into the test—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Which was Jesus' gift to his disciples, telling them to pray that they don't have to enter into moments like he experienced right here.

Jon: You don't have to show down with the *satan*.

Tim: Yeah. Yep, that's right. Uhm—

Jon: "Get behind me—"

Tim: “Get behind me” is the King James. Yeah.

Jon: “Be gone—”

Tim: “Be gone, adversary.” One—

Jon: This is “adversary”? This is, uhm—

Tim: “*Satana*.”

Jon: This is—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: *Satana*.

Tim: Yep. That’s right. And he quotes from just a few lines before the previous quote, which is, “It is written in the Torah, you will bow down to the Lord your God and serve him only.”

Jon: Yeah. Yeah. Worshipping Satan in order to rescue the people who are bound to death, which is bound to Satan in some way, is a very backwards kind of—

[Laughter]

Jon: Technique—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Strategy—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: In and of itself.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: It’s kind of silly.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But there’s also this sense of the theme that we’ve been talking about, which is: We’re not ready. There is a journey that needs to be done.

Tim: This is all about who’s ready.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. What kind of humanity—

Jon: What's it going to take?

Tim: Would—yeah—need to exist to be ready?

Jon: We are dying, and Satan has power—the *satan* has power because we're not ready. So—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: How is Jesus going to help us get ready?

Tim: Yeah, or maybe we could tie that even closely together to say the *satan* has power over the kingdoms of the world because humans voluntarily give the *satan* that power by being loyal to the *satan's* way of defining power and defining how you get power.

Jon: Which shows we're not ready.

Tim: Yeah, which in the Gospel of Matthew is violence, seizing power through violent coercion—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Because Jesus will say these same words to Peter—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Get behind me, Satan,” when Peter says, “You don't have to die to become the Son of Man ruling over the world. You could do that staying alive the way most kings do.”

[Laughter]

Tim: “Most kings stay alive so that they can rule the world.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “So you should do it that way, Jesus.” And Jesus hears—this is Matthew 16—and Jesus hears this same voice speaking through one of his closest friends.

Jon: It's interesting. So all three of these—they all have to do with power, right? Like—

Tim: Yeah. P—

Jon: What do I—

Tim: Uhm—

Jon: Do with my power? What does Jesus do with his power?

Tim: Jesus has divine, cosmic power. He is the beloved Son of God.

Jon: He is the beloved Son. But the wilderness is supposed to show us: Hey, the power we think we have—

Tim: Oh, yeah.

Jon: To sustain ourselves—

Tim: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's right.

Jon: You actually don't have that—

Tim: You don't have—

Jon: That's—

Tim: That's right.

Jon: God's gift to you. Whatever power you have, whatever gift of life that you have in this moment, that's from God.

Tim: Yep.

Jon: You need to learn that. And one place to make that very clear is in the wilderness.

Tim: That's right. Yep. So Jesus chooses not to force his Father's hand or make the Father prove, before the time, that he's going to protect his life. He also trusts that God will provide for his daily needs, bread, and that God will fulfill the destiny as the divine Son to become the ruler of the world. But how? How will the Son have his needs met? How will the Son assume cosmic rule and authority? How will the Son come to discover that his life will be protected by the Father?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This is the first mountain—we talked about this in The Mountain series—this is the first mountain in the Gospel of Matthew. On the other end, the last mountain that appears in Matthew is where Jesus stands risen from the dead, commissioning his disciples in the Great Commission. And the first line is “All authority on the land and in the sky—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Has been given to me.”

Jon: "I have authority."

Tim: So he's gone through the test, both in the wilderness and then on the cross.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He is going to provide bread for others in the wilderness two times over after this. So he has—clearly has the power to make bread.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He's going to be protected from death itself, not by avoiding it, but by going through it. Every one of these tests matches a moment that Jesus will experience later that shows the success of this test.

Jon: So when I think about when you framed it that way and how this psyche that Jesus has, this belief that he has about God and how that brings him through the rest of his life and then death and resurrection and everything and how he shows up for people—the wilderness has the potential to shape us into the kind of person who can live these abundant, selfless lives that bring life to others. Like, that's—

Tim: That's the goal.

Jon: That's the goal of the wilderness.

Tim: That's the goal of human—

Jon: Or that's God's goal of using the wilderness.

Tim: That's right, yeah.

Jon: The wilderness is just the reality that we are not in the garden.

Tim: Yeah, and—

Jon: Or—

Tim: That we don't sustain our own existence.

Jon: And that we don't sustain our own existence. Well—

Tim: The wilderness—

Jon: That becomes just much more apparent in the wilderness.

Tim: That's right. That's right. That's always the case—

Jon: That's always the case.

Tim: Even in the garden.

Jon: In the garden, that's the case.

Tim: That's exactly right.

Jon: In the wilderness—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That just becomes very clear. And we're there because of our own folly. But God allows us to be there and doesn't just bypass it, because we're not ready.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And we need this time in the wilderness, and it's an opportunity to learn something. And that thing to learn is to trust God's timing, his character—

Tim: You'll trust God's timing if you trust God's character.

Jon: Yeah, yeah.

Tim: Yeah. You know, I mentioned just a moment ago how the last lines of Matthew echo back to this—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "All authority in Heaven and Earth ... therefore, go out to all the nations, teaching them everything that I've commanded you and baptizing them in the name—"singular—"of the Father and of the Son and of the Spirit." Where did Jesus just come from here in the—as he's—we're now in the wilderness in Matthew four? He just came from his baptism. So what Jesus wants to invite his followers into is to see that through baptism, you begin to identify yourself with Jesus so closely, so that you become a part of the Father-Son-Spirit community, so that we see what Jesus is doing is doing for us what we fail at doing. And that now changes my position in these wilderness moments of my life. Because I might succeed, I might fail, I might be two steps forward, 14 steps back—

[Laughter]

Tim: Or three steps forward, two steps back, but Jesus becomes the thing, the image, into which God is making me. Because y—you asked earlier, and if so many of these stories in the Hebrew Bible were like: The wilderness is supposed to get us ready, but it just doesn't ever seem to—this story is meant to both show us the ideal of what humans are made for, but then also to give us a comfort to say: And even when I show through my choices I'm maybe not ready for the garden yet, but there is one who loved

me and did it on my behalf and wants to include me within the Father's love through the Spirit, and he'll let me pass the wilderness, so to speak, in him. I don't know, I'm trying to put language—

Jon: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tim: To how the incorporation into what Jesus did on our behalf—that it becomes true of us. He passes it—

Jon: Right.

Tim: With us and for us.

Jon: It's kind of like this burial with Jesus, dying with Jesus—

Tim: Baptized—

Jon: Mo—baptized—

Tim: Into Jesus.

Jon: Into Jesus—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: By Jesus dying on our behalf doesn't mean we don't have to also die.

Tim: Right. Yeah, that's right.

Jon: We're going to die.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: And in fact, we can kind of then do that in a Jesus way—

Tim: That's right.

Jon: Now.

Tim: Yeah. Yes. Jesus going into the wilderness, yeah, doesn't mean that we won't also go through our own cosmic, communal, lifetime, or—

Jon: Personal.

Tim: Season of life wildernesses.

Jon: Yeah. Ther—the wilderness will happen, but we can go through it in a new way now. And this pattern of: Well, people don't know how to deal with the wilderness, and even the wilderness as an opportunity is just not—it's failing—the wilderness can have its right effect in my life. And that right effect is becoming someone who can, in a

moment of scarcity and fear, and just things are going wrong, I can still show up with a sense of abundance and trust.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And I can still decide I'm going to love other people and I'm going to suffer on people's behalf. And you imagine a whole community of people doing that. Suddenly, a wilderness is not going to really feel like a wilderness—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: If everyone's acting that way.

Tim: It's going to feel like a spring of water popping up in the wilderness—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Right?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: A little orchard oasis—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In the desert.

Jon: If I was the only one doing that, I can imagine—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The isolated—

[Laughter]

Jon: Wilderness feeling.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: If you're in a community of people that are showing up that way with each other, that's not going to feel like wilderness.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: It's going to feel like an oasis in the wilderness.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So Jesus, like, slogging it out here in this scene is in a way what he's inviting his followers to, at the end of Matthew's Gospel, is to go—

Jon: Do this communally.

Tim: Do this so that you can go through the wilderness with me together. Yeah, that's one way to think about it. So the poetry of Isaiah of God saying "I will open a river in the middle of the desert and plant juniper trees and cedars—"

Jon: Oh yeah.

Tim: "In the desert—"

Jon: You could be one of those.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Hmm.

[Musical Break (59:04—59:06)]

Jon: That's it for today's episode. Next week, we continue looking at the stories of Jesus as he starts to announce the good news of God's coming garden life.

Tim: Matthew portrays Jesus as a new Moses-shepherd of Israel as a flock in the wilderness, and he's going to do what Moses did for Israel. He's going to provide bread for the lost sheep of Israel who come to him in the wilderness.

Jon: BibleProject is a crowdfunded nonprofit, and we exist to help people experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. Everything that we make is free because of the generous support of thousands of people just like you. Thank you so much for being a part of this with us.

Melanie: Hey, my name is Melanie, and I'm from Portland, Oregon.

Zach: Hi, my name is Zach, and I am from Johnstown, Pennsylvania. I first heard about the BibleProject from my college professor.

Melanie: I first heard about BibleProject about eight years ago at my local church, and I use BibleProject for my own research. I'm a writer, and I love to just dig into God's word.

Zach: I use the BibleProject for my personal spiritual transformation, but I also use it to share with my friends. My favorite thing about the BibleProject is their awesome YouTube videos.

Melanie: I love learning about new things, like through the Wisdom series and the read through the Scriptures series. We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. BibleProject is a nonprofit funded by people like me.

Zach: Find free videos, articles, podcasts, classes, and more on the BibleProject app and at thebibleproject.com.

Jon Horton: Hey, everyone. This is Jon Horton. I'm an engineering manager with our Platform team at BibleProject, which is just a fancy way of saying that my team makes sure all of the right information is available to the websites and apps that we make available for free. I've been working at BibleProject for nearly three years, and my favorite part about my work is that we get to participate in this incredible movement that is bringing the Bible to life for people in new and engaging ways. There couldn't be a better investment of time and energy, and I'm so grateful that I get to be a part of it. There's a whole team of people that bring the podcast to life every week. For a full list of everyone who's involved, check out the show credits in the episode description wherever you stream the podcast, as well as on our website.