

[Psalms 1–2 E4]

[Speakers in the audio file: Jon Collins, Tim Mackie, Young Adults Group Speakers 1–5, and John Horton]

[Musical Introduction (0:00—0:04)]

Jon: Welcome to BibleProject Podcast. For the last few weeks, Tim and I have been studying Psalm one and Psalm two. We read each on their own, and then we read them side by side and saw how they “spark” off each other and connect us to the story of the whole Bible. Today, we’re going to “zoom in” on Psalm two, and look at how Psalm two is extensively quoted in the New Testament. Now, remember, Psalm two is the poem about the anointed king, who God calls “his Son,” who will inherit the whole world; and how rebel kings of the land are called to serve this king. And the first time Psalm two is quoted in the New Testament is during Jesus’ baptism, when the sky “rips open,” and God’s voice from heaven says, “You are my Son.”

Tim: He’s hearing a phrase from the heavenly voice, quoting the first few words of Psalm two. And Jesus, immediately after this, goes out in the wilderness, passes the test that Israel and humanity failed, and then starts announcing the arrival of God’s kingdom. So this voice is saying something of the Son, almost as if it were of like, “it’s go time.” “Go Son. Go get ‘em.”

Jon: Later in the Gospels, right before Jesus heads out to Jerusalem to be killed, he ascends a mountain with three of his disciples, and suddenly his face and clothes begin shining, revealing who he really is. And we hear the voice of the Father from heaven again, declaring, “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him.”

Tim: Jesus’ status as the Son is not happening in this moment; rather this moment on the mountain and the baptism, then, are little, “flash openings” into the true identity of Jesus, going farther back than any of our brains can imagine, into the eternal identity of God.

Jon: We’ll look at how Paul quotes Psalm two to talk about the resurrection of Jesus.

Tim: So what does this mean? That resurrection is linked to the words, “You are my Son. Today I’ve begotten you.”

Jon: And finally in the Revelation, we’ll see how Jesus tells the church in Thyatira that his “Psalm two” royal identity is not for him alone, but that he shares that status of “sons” with those who are his.

Tim: Jesus is the risen Lord of heaven and earth. He’s the Son of God. And what he says here is, “If you guys hang in there, and actually live like who you are, I will give to you what is true of me.”

Jon: Today Tim Mackie and I will explore how the New Testament quotes Psalm two and applies it to Jesus, who then applies it to us. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Musical Break (2:45—2:48)]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hello, Jon Collins.

Jon: We’re going to do one last conversation in this little mini-series on Psalm one and two.

Tim: Yes, yes we are.

Jon: So we read Psalm one, just by itself, and enjoyed it.

Tim: Yup.

Jon: We read Psalm two by itself, we enjoyed it.

Tim: Had a great time.

Jon: Great time.

[Laughter]

Jon: Psalm one and two, then, we read together, as if they were “talking to each other;” as if they were two sides of one big, reflective idea.

Tim: Yeah, yeah, that’s right.

Jon: And that was like, whoa, just, “sparking” with all these cool, new things.

Tim: Yes, I hope it wasn’t too repetitive, but it’s very helpful for me to remind myself, whenever I’m reading at one place in the Bible: any passage in the Bible has many layers of meaning, depending on an expanding, like, circle of context.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Every passage is like one little “tile,” you know, in a larger “mosaic;” or one “puzzle piece” in a bigger “puzzle.” And you can just examine that puzzle piece by itself—in fact, that’s really great; that’s one thing you can meditate on. But then it’s about expanding the circles of context, and then reading the little piece you’re meditating on in relationship to what comes before and after it, or maybe what’s connected to it, in terms of literary design, or connected to it on other scrolls, through hyperlinks. And every one of those layers of meaning is a part of what a biblical text “means.”

Jon: Okay, so you’re saying that the Psalm scroll, for example, is 150 individual poems.

Tim: Right.

Jon: And you could think of each poem as, like, a “tile” in a mosaic, a mosaic being—

Tim: —yeah, an image that is really only clear to you when you back away and you see 300 tiles all arranged in a pattern. And when you’re zoomed in, you’re like, “There’s some blue ones next to each other; there’s some red ones.”

Jon: As you back up and get perspective, a new image shows up.

Tim: Yeah, then you’re like, “a picture of, you know, a face or something.”

Jon: And so as the Psalm scroll was compiled by the scribes and prophets, and these psalms were arranged, but also given their final editorial—

Tim: Shape, yeah, literary design shape.

Jon: —that it was done with all of the Psalm scroll in mind.

Tim: A bigger picture in mind.

Jon: And so that's how a scroll is designed. But then, also, all these scrolls are connected together. Like the Psalm scroll sits alongside the Torah and the Prophets in a really strategic place in the Hebrew Bible, connected to Joshua, being a Torah reader.

Tim: Yeah, we looked at how the ending of Malachi has all these important hyperlinks to Psalm one and two.

Jon: Remind me what was happening in Malachi?

Tim: Malachi is about “the Day of the Lord,” that's going to bring a purifying act of justice, to “sift out” the righteous and the wicked, and purify creation, to make it new.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So, you know, when you're looking at Malachi, tying into the vocabulary of Psalm one or two, or Joshua, you don't always know—and I'm not sure it's always important to know—which one came first or second. And sometimes you can make a case or think about a hypothesis, you know, “This came first, and is quoting from that passage.” But what's just as important is, then, the effect of, now these two different parts of Joshua one and Psalm one “pinging off” each other, and the “electricity flows both ways.” You're supposed to, now, read the book of Joshua in light of the Psalms, and read the Psalms in light of Joshua.

Jon: And so we've backed out a lot to the whole Hebrew Bible. And let's back out one more step—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: —and look at how New Testament literature was reflecting on—especially Psalm two.

Tim: Especially Psalm two. So yeah, Jesus and the apostles, for them the Scriptures are ancient—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —and they see, in them, layers of meaning that, if you're only looking at the one little poem by itself, you're kind of like, “What? How did they get that?” So this will be a principle that we'll see, is that whenever Jesus and the apostles are quoting from their

Scriptures, they're *never* just connecting to *one* passage. They're connecting to a *network* of passages. And they use the language from the passage in the network that has, like, the "lowest hanging fruit," most often.

Jon: Hmm. Okay. I think I understand. I mean, I think a lot of people have this experience where they see the New Testament quoting the Old Testament, and you go and look it up.

Tim: Mhm. You're kind of like, "Huh?"

Jon: You're often like, "Wait, hold on..."

Tim: "How did they get that?"

Jon: "How did"—yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The point they're making doesn't seem to be what exactly is there. What's going on? And you're saying, it's because they're thinking about a whole network of texts.

Tim: A whole, hyperlinked network of texts. Mhm.

Jon: Okay. And so we've got to learn to think like them.

Tim: Yeah, you know, the biblical authors, Jesus, and the apostles know the Scriptures so well, they're never just wanting to draw our attention to the one thing they're using words from when they're quoting. They want to draw to our attention a whole network of linked passages. And the way that Psalm two gets quoted and used in the New Testament is just an excellent specimen of this technique.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And once you get used to it, you're like, "Oh, I get it." But if you don't know what they're doing or what to look for, it can feel, like, random. So Psalm two just gives us a great example, I thought of; there's so many cool examples that I just wanted to make a whole episode in this little series on it.

Jon: Great.

Tim: So the way that Psalm two fits into the huge mosaic of the whole Christian Bible, Old and New Testaments, let's "dive in," pun intended, because we're going to start with the baptism of Jesus.

[Laughter]

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Let's dive in.

[Musical Break (8:52–9:23)]

Tim: So we've looked at the baptism of Jesus...a lot of times.

Jon: Yeah, dozens...yeah.

Tim: Yeah. It's always worth a little more meditation though. Okay. So Jesus—in Mark, Matthew, and Luke, in the early parts of all three of their presentations of Jesus, have the moment where Jesus goes to the Jordan River to get baptized by John, the Immerser—and he goes into the waters; he comes up out of the waters; and we are told, in all three Gospels, that “the heavens opened.” Mark actually tells us the heavens were “ripped apart.” It's like a violent word, of “ripping.” Super interesting. The Spirit comes down, in the bird-like form of a dove. And then there's a voice from heaven. And the voice says three things; three elements to what the voice says: “You are my Son, the beloved one. With you I am well-pleased.” And in that phrase, “You are my Son” is coming right from Psalm two, verse seven.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So real quick, let's just upload what Psalm two, verse seven is.

Jon: Right.

Tim: So remember, in the flow of Psalm two, it began with “the nations raging”—

Jon: Yep.

Tim: —and then they have a little “tantrum” speech.

[Laughter]

Jon: Which, the “tantrum” speech is—

Tim: Well, the kings are rebelling against Yahweh and his Messiah.

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: And they say, “Let’s tear off their chains and throw off their fetters; their bonds,” or whatever.

Jon: “Let’s live how we want to live, which is in, like, violent, open rebellion against God. We want to take power as we want to take power.”

Tim: That’s right. Yep. That’s what kings do. And they “stand up” to make that little speech. The next stanza of Psalm two, in the poem, is Yahweh is sitting. Yahweh “sits down,” meaning “he’s enthroned, up in the skies.” He’s not “biting his fingernails.” God’s not stressed out. He’s like, “I’ve already set in motion a plan to deal with those kings.” And that is, “appointing a king on Mount Zion, my holy hill.” So that’s the opening of the poem: what the kings “stand and say,” and then what Yahweh “sits down and says.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Mhm. So that’s “part one” of the poem. “Part two” is, then, that king just starts speaking up and saying, “Hey, dear reader, let me tell you all a decree that Yahweh made about me. He said to me”—and now here we are—“You are my Son. Today I have birthed you.”

Jon: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: So there's three speeches.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: The nations, they have their little "tantrum" speech; Yahweh has his "announcement" speech of like, "I got a plan and it's a king, the true king;" and then the king gets a speech. And the king's speech is what we're going to focus in on. And it's the king saying that his identity is of being God's Son.

Tim: Mhm. Being the Son of God.

Jon: "Birthed by God" on that day, that enthronement day.

Tim: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And so the Son, all of a sudden, pipes up, speaking to us, the reader—but then the Son is reporting a past conversation, that Yahweh had with him. So this is a conversation in the past, in terms of this little narrative.

Jon: Alright.

Tim: Then after the Son finishes his speech, he goes on and he says, "God told me to ask for the nations as my inheritance. So that's what I'm going to get." Then Psalm two ended with the poet, then, coming out of the little story and then addressing the kings personally and saying, "Hey, kings, given the situation, you better be wise and humble yourselves and give your allegiance to the king. Yep—to the Son."

Jon: "Kiss the Son."

Tim: "Kiss the Son." Yep.

Jon: Alright.

Tim: That's Psalm two.

Jon: That's Psalm two. So what does it mean that this king is "a son"?

Tim: Mhm, yeah. So one layer of meaning, just reading Psalm two by itself, "son of God" was a typical royal title, in the rhetoric of kings in the ancient Near East. When they're claiming that their role as king is "divinely appointed"—in fact, their very identity is bound up with unity with the gods, they're the "offspring of the gods."

Jon: This would be a typical thing for an ancient king to say, "I am the son of God."

Tim: Yeah. And it was said many times—many times by Egyptian or Mesopotamian kings, *long* before the Israelite people ever existed, in ancient Egypt.

Jon: Long tradition of this.

Tim: Yeah. So the Israelite kingship emerged in a time period where “son of God” was a thing you could say. So it’s, at least, a title for a king. Is it *more* than that? Is that *all* that it is, or is there more layers of meaning? And that has to do with how “Son of God” fits in as a theme study through the whole Hebrew Bible, which we don’t have time for.

Jon: We don’t have time to do that? So—hmm, but we are going to talk about this phrase, “Son of God,” as it relates to Jesus.

Tim: Yeah, we are.

Jon: Give me the punch line.

Tim: Yeah, I mean, essentially, humans are presented as “the sons of God,” in the early chapters of Genesis. They’re called “the image of God,” but just as a child’s “an image” of their parents; so humans are “an image” of God. Therefore, humans are also, you could call them, “sons of God.”

Jon: And that’s—in the New Testament, we are called “children of God” or “sons of God.”

Tim: Totally. Exactly. Yeah. So humanity ends up, kind of, making a mess of their vocation as the “image/sons” of God. And so what God does is choose one family out of the nations: the people of Israel. He makes a covenant with them and calls them “my firstborn son.” That’s what God calls the people of Israel, in Exodus four. Then the people don’t do a good job of being royal priests and God’s covenant partners. So God chooses one family out of the people of Israel, and that’s the line of David. And to the line of David in second Samuel seven—ooh, which will come into play in some later examples that we’ll see—second Samuel seven is where God says, “Hey, I’m going to raise up your seed after you, David—after you die. And that king will build a house for my name, and he’ll reign forever and ever, and I will be a Father to that one, and he will be my son.” So everybody keeps failing: humanity; Israel; the line of David fails miserably at being a “son of God,” in terms of being a faithful “reflection” and representative of God in the world. So this is what leads to the crisis of the Hebrew Bible, is: no Israelite human or Son of David ever fully is what God called any of those sons to be. And so, in the prophets, you get an anticipation of a “future David,” who’s described in ways that makes it hard to tell if this king is Yahweh or a human son of Yahweh.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: That's, in a nutshell, where the Hebrew Bible "tees up" this moment, right here, at the baptism.

Jon: So we get to Jesus, and Jesus is called "God's Son," and we start wrestling with the identity of Jesus: "Is Jesus just a human who, now, can finally claim this identity of being 'the image of God,' the way all humans are meant to be? Or is Jesus—"

Tim: "—something more"?

Jon: "—something more"? And that's what the New Testament authors, yeah—

Tim: —are trying to communicate. That's right. So that "something more" is not only indicated by the using of Psalm two, that "something more," say in Mark's Gospel, is: Jesus is identified with "the Lord, who is coming on the Great Day of Yahweh," interestingly, from the end of Malachi—the end of Malachi gets quoted by Mark: "The Lord is coming; prepare the way of the Lord; he's coming, in the wilderness." And then Mark says, "And Jesus came."

[Laughter]

Jon: What does Yahweh look like when he comes?

Tim: Yeah, yeah. Mark's already made the claim that Jesus is "the Yahweh," coming on the Day of Yahweh, in the paragraph *right* before the baptism. Then he rolls up, and Jesus hears this, that: "you are my Son." And, on one level, it means "a human king who's been appointed by God, who shares the most intimate connection with God;" that's what it means in its ancient Near Eastern—

Jon: Yeah, and "the king who's going to set the world right."

Tim: The "king who's going to set the world right." Exactly. However, given that Mark just said, "This guy, Jesus, is Yahweh come to us as the human," when we hear these words, "You are my Son," it's sort of like, "Wha—?" And also, "You are my Son"—what you're supposed to know is the next line, "Today I've birthed you"—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: —and that this is a quote of the Son telling us about a conversation he and his divine Father had a long time ago, like, in the past. So when the voice says, "You are

my Son,” is this bestowing a brand-new identity on Jesus? Or is this calling to mind something that was, like, set long ago, in the past?

Jon: So the “today;” what’s the “today”?

Tim: Oh, right. Yes. Yeah, exactly.

Jon: Like—

Tim: Okay, let’s go back to Psalm two, and just—we’re reading Psalm two, we’re backing up in time. So birthing—if I’m saying to you, “Today I’m giving birth to you,” we’re working in the language of metaphor, clearly. So “divine birthing” of “a royal son,” on one level, is ancient and Near Eastern-style rhetoric to talk about a king’s “enthronement” or “appointment.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So a basic-level of meaning, Psalm two, could be imagined as: a king from the line of David telling us about the day that Yahweh appointed him as the king of Israel. That’s a basic-level of meaning. However, when I get to Psalm two in the Hebrew Bible, I already have all this expectation of, like, “But no king from the line of David ever did that.”

Jon: Right.

Tim: And the Psalm scroll was put together after the exile and after the miserable failure of the kings from the line of David. So what king is this about? Because this psalm and this promise of God, of a coming king, still needs to be fulfilled because God won’t go back on his word. So that’s the expanded meaning of Psalm two that’s being drawn on here by the gospel authors. And what does it mean for, then, Jesus to hear these words?

Jon: Hmm. Yeah.

Tim: So what he’s hearing are words that presumably he, himself, uttered in the past through David, the prophet. Right?

Jon: Wait, what?

Tim: Okay, so let’s “zoom in” to Jesus at the baptism. He’s hearing a phrase, from the heavenly voice, quoting the first few words of Psalm two—it’s like quoting the first few lines of a melody...you got to finish it out.

Jon: Right.

Tim: “You are my Son...Oh yeah, today I’ve begotten you.” Those words aren’t quoted from the heavenly voice, but it’s the next words of Psalm two. So what does it mean for Jesus to hear these words uttered from the Father in heaven? What would it mean for him to hear, “You are my Son, today I’ve birthed you?” This could be an announcement of something happening in the present, right, that’s bestowing upon Jesus something that hasn’t been before.

Jon: Right.

Tim: That’s a *possible* reading. Mhm. But I just heard a quotation right before the story that said, “Jesus is Yahweh, coming on the Day of the Lord, as a human,” that identified him. So already I’m kind of like, “Hmm. Alright. Well, there’s a lot more to this guy.” So what Mark’s doing is presenting, in classic, Jewish meditation-literature style, a puzzle in front of us that you have to read—keep reading through the Gospel—to discern the ultimate identity of the Son. But it could be that Jesus is getting appointed as the Son, in this moment, so that Psalm two becomes, sort of, like, a predictive prophecy: “One day, there’ll come a king, of which God will say this.” And now here’s what’s happening.

Jon: But that doesn’t seem to be the way the rest of the New Testament authors think about the identity of Jesus.

Tim: Right. Right.

Jon: If you look at the prologue of John’s Gospel, for example, you see them going, “This Son existed before this moment, and is united with God in a way that is just fundamentally different.”

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: In fact, this Jesus is what, then, Trinitarian theologians will later try to “tease out” as “being God, but distinct from God.”

Tim: “Being, as the eternal Son.” So let’s go forward, then, to the next story in Matthew, Mark, and Luke that use Psalm two, that really is, sort of like, the “answering,” or “closing the loop” that was left open in the baptism. And that is, the mountain of Jesus’s transfiguration.

[Musical Break (23:18–23:46)]

Tim: Okay. So we're looking at Mark, chapter nine; Matthew 17; or Luke, chapter nine, where the story is found. And Jesus is up on a high mountain. He's with James, Peter, and John. Famously, Moses and Elijah appear next to him, and Jesus starts glowing. His face is glowing, his clothes are glowing. Mark even adds a little detail that his clothes are "more white than any laundry-person could ever wash a set of clothes." Anyway, it's pretty cool. And the cloud forms, and the voice says, "This is my Son, the beloved one." And then—depends on which Gospel you're reading—there's three different versions of what the voice says.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So in Mark's version, it's, "This is my Son, the beloved one; listen to him."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: In Matthew, it's, "This is my Son, the beloved one, with whom I'm well pleased." That's from the baptism. "Listen to him."

Jon: Hmm. Okay.

Tim: Luke has, "This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen to him."

[Laughter]

Tim: This is so great, man. I love this. I love the Bible.

Jon: Yeah, you delight in this. I think a lot of people come to this and go, "Okay, what was actually said from the heavens?"

Tim: Oh, sure.

Jon: Right? "This is confusing." Like, "this didn't happen three different times."

Tim: Oh, right.

Jon: Right? “And one thing was actually said.”

Tim: Mmm, mhm.

Jon: “So why are we getting three versions?”

Tim: Yeah. Three takes.

Jon: And you’re like, “yeah!”

Tim: “Yeah, that’s great.” It’s even better. It’s, like, “multi-stereo.”

Jon: Explain.

Tim: Well, the Gospel authors’ value doesn’t seem to be giving us “video camera footage;” security footage. They want to relay an event to us, and weave into the story through little “tweaks,” the meaning and import of the story. And that’s what these little differences represent.

Jon: This is important, I think—

Tim: This is *super* important.

Jon: —because to change a word of what God said from the heavens to Jesus—let’s say it was, “This is my Son, the beloved,” and Luke goes, “Hmm. I’m going to change that.” That’s...*what?*

Tim: Yeah. But he’s changing it by—

Jon: He changed it to “the chosen one.”

Tim: Changed “the beloved one,” to “the chosen one.”

Jon: But that’s *not* what God said.

Tim: But it *is* what God said.

[Laughter]

Tim: It’s what God said to the servant in the book of Isaiah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So the phrase, “You are my loved one; I love you,” and “I have chosen you; you are my chosen one,” is all a repeated, kind of, switching the titles back and forth, for “the servant of God,” in Isaiah 40 to 55.

Jon: So what’s more important to Luke than “what were the exact sounds that were heard out of the heavens that day—”

Tim: Right.

Jon: —was, “What—”

Tim: *What’s the meaning?*

Jon: “What’s the meaning?” And part of that meaning is connecting Jesus to “the servant” in Isaiah.

Tim: The figure of “the servant.” Mhm.

Jon: That Jesus was hearing from the Father that he is “the Son”—and that’s connected to all of these ideas in the Hebrew Bible.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. It’s what I was saying earlier. Whenever they’re quoting from the Scriptures, they’re never just quoting from one, they’re always quoting from a network. And here, the same voice out of God’s mouth can get hyperlinked to a different network of texts, based on which Gospel author you’re reading.

[Laughter]

Tim: So they’re all things that God “said” about the servant. Matthew’s version keeps the phrase spoken at the baptism, “with whom I’m well pleased.” That’s also what God says to the servant in Isaiah 42. So both Luke and Matthew are linking “the Son” of Psalm two to “the servant” of Isaiah, but by networking it to different phrases. Isn’t that interesting?

Jon: Yeah. So there was something about that moment. Jesus went up on a mountain; the disciples experienced something; Jesus transformed. There was this kind of prophetic, wild experience.

Tim: Yeah, experience that the disciples had. And Moses and Elijah are there, talking to a Jesus that looks like he's on fire.

Jon: Yeah. And as they went away from that, and they needed to explain to people, like, what happened—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: —they are like, “Well, we heard a voice from heaven.”

Tim: Yeah. And they want to make sure that “the voice from heaven” is connected to what the voice said at the baptism. That's very clear, that they want to put those two moments together. And then Luke and Matthew, you know, introduce little “tweaks” to make sure that we don't miss that “the Son” of Psalm two, is who Jesus is, *and* that all of those are the same figure as “the suffering, exalted servant” of that section of Isaiah.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: The precise wording is less important to them than the *meaning* of what the voice said. That's the speed bump. You want to back up the car and roll over the speed bump more slowly. You want to feel every... But that's good, Jon. That's good.

Jon: Yeah, I'm not the only one who's feeling this too, because—

Tim: It used to bother me too. Mhm.

Jon: Yeah. A voice from heaven—God's voice from heaven—announced *something* that day. We don't actually have word-for-word exactly what was announced. What we have is a number of the disciples reflecting back and thinking about, not exactly *what* was said, but the *meaning* of what was said.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And to do that, they start quoting from Scripture, which may or may not have been the Scripture God was quoting from heaven...? I mean...

Tim: Well, I mean, what are we—“a voice from heaven...”

Jon: Right, did they hear a voice from heaven?

Tim: Oh, I think so.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Definitely.

Jon: Alright.

Tim: Yeah. But what I'm saying is, any encounter—

Jon: Could they have recorded it?

Tim: —with the being who is the eternal, infinite source of all reality—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: —any encounter I have with that being, is going to be a moment that's saturated with just, like, so much meaning, I'm going to be pondering and thinking about it and getting new insights out of it for the rest of my life. There's a wonderful moment in Psalm 62 that, I think, captures this, in two poetic lines. And I've showed this before over the years, Psalm 62 verse 11, "One thing God has spoken; two things I have heard."

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah. That's super-fascinating, that the voice of God could be so...hmm.

Tim: Dense?

Jon: Dense...?

Tim: So rich? Maybe rich. Think of, like, "a rich meal."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: A really complex, rich like—

Jon: Mmm, all the "notes."

Tim: —a dinner dish and...

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Or a cup of coffee, some fancy cup of coffee.

Jon: Like, what are you hearing?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: You could actually be hearing two things at once.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: It's wild to think about. Okay, okay.

Tim: But this is basic to how the biblical authors think about divine speech, is that: the precise wording is important, but it's *less* important than the *meaning* and the *ideas* that the words are meant to convey. And then: a hyperlinked collection of scriptural texts, where we hear God's voice, you can hear God's voice and have your mind go to different texts within the collection. But you're still hearing God's voice.

Jon: When they encountered "God's voice," they were hearing Isaiah, and they were hearing Psalm one [two], and they were hearing all these things, and it was all, kind of, "mixed together." When you actually have to write down, "what was the voice," you're like, "Oh, well, okay, I guess I was hearing this, and I was hearing this, and I was hearing this"—

Tim: —This is the king from the line of David; this is the suffering, exalted servant of Isaiah. "Listen to him" comes right from Deuteronomy. Quote—like, copy and paste—Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses says, "Listen, when I die, God is going to raise up a prophet, like me, from among you."

Jon: "Listen to him."

Tim: "When God does that, listen to him." So Jesus is being identified as "the Son of David;" "the servant of Isaiah;" and as "the new Moses," particularly by Moses.

Jon: The voice of God is saying all these things.

Tim: At once.

Jon: At once. Somehow the disciples are experiencing that.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: One thing God has spoken...

Jon: *Three things.*

Tim: Many, *many* things have we heard.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So the key thing is: this “closes the loop” on that open question from the baptism. So, is Jesus being appointed as the Son *at the moment of his baptism*, meaning he didn’t have that identity before? And this line comes along, right—of this repeat of Psalm two—changes it from “you are my Son” to “this is my Son.” All three Gospels have “this is my Son.” And Jesus is not being, like, “adopted” or “appointed” here.

Jon: Right, yeah.

Tim: He’s standing in the middle of Moses and Elijah, as the one “on fire.” That, itself, is a narrative claim too.

Jon: Yeah. I love how you brought this up a couple of times for me. And each time I feel like I come to it with a fresh awe, which is: this is Jesus being depicted as “the radiance of Yahweh” on the mountain.

Tim: The one that Moses met, and Elijah.

Jon: When Moses went up on the mountain, and somehow experienced God’s glory, what did he see? And this is the story of what he saw. It’s so wild. It’s so wild.

Tim: Yeah, it is so wild. You could—even get more...because what he had—Moses—asked for was, “Let me see your face.” And God said, “My back will do, otherwise you’ll fry.”

[Laughter]

Tim: But then, here’s Moses seeing the face of the Lord in the person of Jesus.

Jon: And it’s Jesus.

Tim: Yeah, so, I mean, are we meant to think that this is the moment? Is this, like, some time-bending, portal-moment where Moses is getting the answer to that request? But either way, it’s clear: Jesus is in a “slot” of Yahweh. So there’s the invisible Yahweh, high and above, that can never be seen—“no man can see me and live—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —which is what God said to Moses—but then there’s a visible form of Yahweh. And that visible Yahweh became human in the person of Jesus. And Jesus’ status as the Son is not “happening” in this moment. It’s not being bestowed on him.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Rather, this moment, on the mountain and the baptism, then, are little “flash openings” into the true identity of Jesus, going farther back than any of our brains can imagine, like, into the eternal identity of God, the eternal Son.

Jon: The eternal Son.

Tim: I was hugely helped by the work of a scholar of New Testament Second Temple Judaism: Matthew Bates has an excellent book on—it’s called *The Birth of the Trinity*. It’s about how, much of Trinitarian theology was birthed in Jesus and the apostles making claims about who Jesus is, using the language of scriptural texts like what we’re doing.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And here’s what he notices in the patterns of the use of Psalm two in the New Testament, and this will go for the other passages we’re going to look at. He says, “For the earliest Christians, Psalm two, verse seven was consistently regarded, not merely as direct speech made from the Father to the Son. Yes, that. But as a speech that was originally spoken by the Son”—remember? Because Psalm two says, “Hey, dear reader, let me tell you a decree that Yahweh made about me. He said, (quote).”

Jon: Uh-huh. Yep.

Tim: So back to Matthew Bates. So this is a speech “originally spoken by the Son, but reporting words the Father spoke to him at an earlier time. They believed,” that is, Jesus and the apostles, “that David, under the inspiring influence of the Spirit, that David was capable of taking on a different persona when speaking as a prophet, so that the words are not David’s alone. Rather, they are the words of the pre-existent Messiah reporting an earlier conversation between himself and his Father.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That’s what Jesus and the apostles saw when they read Psalm two.

Jon: You’re saying there’s this identity of the Father-Son that goes into the eternal past.

Tim: That just *is*.

Jon: That just *is*.

Tim: Yeah. It “was, and is, and is to come.”

Jon: And when the Father and the Son communicate to each other, the phrase that just saturates it is, “You are my Son.”

Tim: “Today, I have birthed you.”

Jon: “Today, I have birthed you.” And it’s this kind of intimate, like, communal way of the Father-Son connecting.

Tim: Yeah. It’s using a metaphor of human experience, of a “parent” having “birthed” a child. But actually, look at this: the Father, saying this of the Son, is actually cast in, also, a “maternal role” of birthing.

Jon: Yeah. Right. Yeah.

Tim: So it kind of breaks—right?—our biological sex categories anyway.

Jon: Sure.

Tim: And that this “birthing” is a metaphor of human experience, to invite us into the infinite mystery of the Christian claim about God revealed in Jesus, in these moments right here. That God, for a Christian, refers to a communion of eternal love between the one God, having more than one within that one God. And there you go.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: I’m not going to try and improve on the metaphorical language of “Father, Son, and birthing,” because that’s...

Jon: What I was going to reflect on is when Jesus hears this at the baptism, or hears this at the mountain of transfiguration, these are very familiar words—

Tim: Oh, yeah.

Jon: —that have been spoken between him and the Father.

Tim: Yeah. I mean, when you use the past tense, words that “have been spoken—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —that’s us, looking back in time. It’s also true *today*, “I’ve birthed you.” Like, it’s...

Jon: "This always is, always is happening."

Tim: The eternal present.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: The Son is always, *today*, coming from the Father as a "word, being birthed." And it will always be the case.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah, this is the moment in each of these three Gospels—back to the baptism—where Jesus immediately, after this, goes out into the wilderness, passes the test that Israel and humanity failed, and then starts announcing the arrival of God's kingdom. So this voice is saying something of the Son—almost, as it were, of like, "It's go time."

[Laughter]

Tim: "Here's who you are."

Jon: "Let's rally around this."

Tim: "You have always been, always will be this. Now it's time. Go Son. Go get 'em."

[Laughter]

Tim: And then the mountain of transfiguration is the "pivot point" in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, of when Jesus "sets his face" to go to Jerusalem. So both are, as it were, "commissioning" moments, but they are commissioning the Son, who's always been the Son, to go do the next thing. And that's the role that Psalm two plays. Isn't that fascinating? Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "One thing God says. Many things I have heard." Okay, let's do another one.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Okay.

[Musical Break (40:00—40:24)]

Tim: We're shifting totally from the Gospels to Acts. So I'm going to jump into Acts chapter 13, like, middle of the book of Acts.

Jon: Alright.

Tim: So, the apostles and the Jerusalem community has been scattered out of Jerusalem, after Stephen got executed. Paul has been confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus. So by Acts 13, he's in full, "missionary mode," cruising around with Barnabas. In fact, that's where we jump in. It's: Paul and a bunch of his companions go to a town called Pisidian Antioch, and this is Acts 13, verse 13. And we're told, "On the day of Sabbath, they went to a synagogue, and they sat down. And there was a reading of the Torah and Prophets. And these synagogue officials said, 'Oh, hey, new guys, brothers, do you have any, you know, challenge or encouragement to offer the people? Go ahead, have a speech.' That—real risky "open mic" situation.

Jon: Yeah. "Open mic moment," yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: "So Paul stood up and, motioning with his hand, he said, 'Men of Israel and those of you who fear God'"—probably talking about non-Israelites—

Jon: Who were there.

Tim: —who were there. "Listen up." And he does this amazing speech that retells the whole story of Israel, from the calling of Abraham forward—so cool—then, leading up to God's calling on David. And then he retells the story of Jesus arriving, "doing mighty deeds as a prophet." And then, Acts 13, verse 28, he said, "Even though they"—the

leaders of Jerusalem—“found no grounds for putting him to death, they asked Pilate that he be executed.” So I’m fast forwarding us to the death. “And when they carried out all that was written about him...”

Jon: Meaning, “when they killed him.” But all of this was “written about him”?

Tim: Yeah. Acts presents “the death of Jesus” not as a surprise but as part, paradoxically, of the divine plan. “They took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him up from the dead,” Paul says, “and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. These are the very ones that are now witnesses to all the people. We’re announcing to you the good news of the promise made to our ancestors. God’s fulfilled the promise to our children when he raised up Jesus, like it’s written in the second Psalm”—it numbers it—“*You are my Son; today I’ve begotten you.*”

Jon: So now, as he’s reflecting on the resurrection of Jesus, he’s hearing Psalm two being spoken, of: “You are my Son.”

Tim: Yes. Mhm. That’s interesting.

Jon: So you said it’s a “go-time,” like, saying—

Tim: Yeah. Yep.

Jon: —in the baptism.

Tim: In the baptism.

Jon: “You’re going to go in the wilderness and pass the test.”

Tim: And that presumes that it is an eternal statement of the Father to the Son from eternity past, present—the eternal “now”—and that it’s a “go-time” announcement.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So now we have, kind of, two moments.

Jon: I see. It’s the perpetual, eternal, like, way the Father-Son experience each other.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: It’s the “go-time” announcement in the baptism and in the Mount of Transfiguration

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Tim: Yeah.

Jon: —and then it's also this, kind of, victorious moment in the resurrection of: *death will not even separate us*; "You are my Son."

Tim: Yeah, okay. So what does this mean, that "resurrection" is linked to the words—and he quotes—"You're my Son. Today I've begotten you"? So is he metaphorically applying the birthing, "Today I've birthed you," to the resurrection in the sense of it's—

Jon: —birthed in a new life.

Tim: Right? Because "birth" is about "life." That's one possibility.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: It's also possible that he's got multiple texts on the brain. There's multiple hyperlinks here, because it's very interesting that in one of the biblical passages most often connected to Psalm two, and I've already alluded to it, is God's promise to David about a future king that would come from his line, in second Samuel seven. And here it is again, second Samuel, chapter seven, verse 12, God says to David, "When your days are complete"—when you die—"and you lay down with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you. The one who comes forth from you, I'll establish his kingdom. He'll build a house for my name. I'll establish his kingdom forever. I'll be a Father to him. He'll be a son to me." So the language of "Father-Son relationship" and "raising up seed"—

Jon: —is connected to an eternal kingdom.

Tim: Yeah, an eternal kingdom. Yeah. What kind of—what kind of king could be called "the Son of God who's going to reign forever"? Hmm. And just this phrase, "I'll raise up seed after you." Which, on its first layer of meaning, I think is just referring to: there'll be a king born, to be born after you, and come into your royal power. It's metaphorically, like, taking somebody from "low" and raising them "up, high." It's like a "spatial metaphor" for, "there's going to be a descendant of yours who's born, who becomes an adult—right?—who restores your royal reputation and power and kingdom, and rules." That's what "raise up" means, on one level.

Jon: Right.

Tim: But it seems like Paul is connecting that "raising-up" language—

Jon: —with resurrection.

Tim: —with Jesus, like, “walking out of the tomb alive” after being executed. He’s linking “resurrection” and the language of...

Jon: So you think he has second Samuel on the brain, too?

Tim: ...I think he has both passages on the brain. And why do I think that?

Jon: Yeah, why do you think that?

[Laughter]

Tim: Paul gives us a little “window” into his basic way of summarizing the good news and the identity of Jesus. He’s penned it in a little poem that he uses to open the letter to the Roman churches. And he talks about, in Romans chapter one, verse two, he says, “Listen, I’m an apostle. I’ve been set apart for the good news of God”—just like Acts 13, “We have good news to tell you”—“That good news has been promised beforehand through the prophets in the holy Scriptures.” That’s what was happening in that synagogue in Acts. Like, they read the Torah and Prophets, and Paul says, “I got news for you.” And in Romans, Paul says, “That good news promise was about his Son, who was born from the seed of David,” right—the language is right out of second Samuel seven. So “he was born from the seed of David according to the flesh.”

Jon: Like, his human nature.

Tim: Right.

Jon: His human lineage.

Tim: Yeah, his human lineage, mhm, “who was marked out as,” or “appointed as, the Son of God with power from his raising up from the dead according to,” or you could probably, means, “by means of the spirit of holiness, the Holy Spirit. That is, Jesus, Messiah, our Lord.” Now it’s a dense little poetic set of lines.

Jon: Okay. But the Son was “born, a seed of David according to the flesh.”

Tim: Mhm. Yep.

Jon: And he was “declared the Son of God through resurrection.”

Tim: Through resurrection, “by the power of the Spirit.”

Jon: “By the power of the Spirit.”

Tim: “According to the Spirit.” So, “according to the flesh, he’s a human.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that human body came from “the seed of David.” He’s also, like, a divine Son of God, and that was made “public” by the “raising up of the dead according to the Scriptures.” He’s using the ideas of Psalm two, and connecting Jesus’ “Psalm two status” with his “raising up from the dead.” So does that mean that Jesus wasn’t that before?

Jon: Oh, right.

Tim: So we’re back to that question in Mark, in the baptism. And you can go out many places in Paul’s writings, and he doesn’t think that Jesus *became* the Son of God at a certain moment in time. But there was a moment when, the promise made to the line of David got “joined together” and was fulfilled by the eternal Son of God. It’s sort of like there was a “job description” for a king from the line of David, waiting to be fulfilled. And the Hebrew Bible was trying to paint that picture in many ways. And the Gospel authors, Jesus, are telling us that: the one who is the eternal Son of God—so Psalm two can describe that eternal Son-ness—became a human to fulfill the open-ended, unresolved, unfulfilled task of a “son-of-David,” Son of God. And that Psalm two can also be applied to *that*, and that the resurrection was a moment that brought that to pass.

Jon: Brought what to pass?

Tim: Hmm. It was the moment where the eternal Son fulfilled the “job description” of the human, “son of David role”—

Jon: Hmm. “Fulfilled the job description?”

Tim: —by overcoming death in the resurrection.

Jon: That’s interesting, because the idea of being an “image of God,” “son of God,” is immediately, in the story of Adam and Eve, of, “Hey, eat of the tree of life.”

Tim: Right, Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: And you get this picture of “life that doesn’t end” when you eat of God’s life. And so death is this tragedy that humans experience that is keeping us from our true, like, identity as God’s sons.

Tim: Yeah. It keeps us from fulfilling and, yeah, living fully into our identity as the children of God.

Jon: So if you're going to die, then you're really not able to be the Son of God, or the image of God.

Tim: You're not, yeah. Death is—for the biblical authors and in our life experience—is the unavoidable end of all the meaning and hope that built up over the course of our lives. What else is it, except the great, just, catastrophe—right? That “unravels” all the meaning we've been building in our lives. So God's commitment to the human family as his children, to rescue them from death, is a job that could only be fulfilled by somebody who could overcome it. But it's got to be a human.

[Laughter]

Tim: So the language of Psalm two, hyperlinked to second Samuel seven, become Paul's way of using the Son of God language to refer not only to his eternal identity but also to him fulfilling the job role that humanity needs, for someone to conquer death on their behalf. And he gets there by linking the language of Psalm two with second Samuel seven, to describe the resurrection of Jesus.

Jon: Okay. Alright. So Psalm two, for the Gospel authors and for Paul, is a way to reflect on a number of things. It's Jesus', like, eternal identity—the “always-is,” the “always-happening,” like, connection of the Father and Son, which is a way to reflect on the identity of God.

Tim: Yeah. Whoa.

Jon: Okay, whoa.

Tim: Next level.

Jon: It's also used to describe these moments of “go time,” when the eternal Son becomes flesh and then has to go and pass the test in the wilderness, or go to Jerusalem to get killed. It's like the “go-time” phrase.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And then it's also this moment of victory when Jesus defeats death and says, "To be the Son of God means, connected to God's life forever. Death can't stop this."

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Mhm.

Jon: And that's the moment of—

Tim: —of the resurrection.

Jon: "I am the Son."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yep. Then, when Jesus invites his followers to trust him and then see that who they are is "sons and daughters of God," in him—so that what's true of him is true of me and my identity—what you find are uses of Psalm two, where the apostles will then use Psalm two to describe disciples of Jesus and their experience of the world. This is so interesting. So back to the book of Acts. Earlier, Peter and John get arrested in the temple courts for sharing the good news about Jesus. They get put in prison by the temple leaders. They get released from prison after a warning. And in Acts chapter four, verse 23, Peter and John, released from prison, go back to their companions. They told them everything the chief priests and elders said, and when they all heard this, they lifted up their voices to God and they prayed. And here's their prayer, "Oh, Lord, it is you who made the sky and the land and the sea and everything in them"—a little seven-day creation note right there—"and by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father, David, your servant said..." So, "Lord, you said something, by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of our father, David, your servant."

[Laughter]

Tim: And then what follows is a quotation of the opening lines of Psalm two, "Why do the nations rage? Why do the peoples devise futile things? The kings of the earth take their stand, rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Messiah." So that's the opening of their prayer.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Then look at how they make sense of both Psalm two and what just happened in the last day. They say in their prayer, “Truly in this city, there were gathered together against your holy servant, Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the nations and the peoples of Israel.”

Jon: Oh, interesting. So they’re looking at Psalm two and “the nations that are raging,” they’re like, “Yeah. That—Herod and Pontius Pilate—was ‘the nations raging,’”

Tim: Yes. Yeah.

Jon: And when “peoples are devising futile things,” yeah, that’s “the people of Israel handing Jesus over.”

Tim: The temple leaders.

Jon: Wow. Okay.

Tim: So in Psalm two—you remember? You were feeling this in Psalm two—it creates a very “us-and-them;” “we’re the Israelites with our king, and too bad if you’re the nations, you’re going to get stomped.”

Jon: “You’re going to get crushed.”

Tim: And they actually include “the leaders of Israel” within “the peoples” who were raging at the opening of Psalm two. That’s fascinating. So verse 29 of Acts four: “Now, Lord, take note of their threats. Grant that your servants can speak your word with confidence. Extend your hand to heal so that signs and wonders take place through the name of your holy servant, Jesus.’ And when they prayed, the place where they gathered together was shaken.” It’s, like, a little “Pentecost moment.” Because the whole house, you know, was shaking in the wind, “and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God’s word boldly.”

Jon: So they’ve just suffered—

Tim: Yes. Yeah.

Jon: —the way Jesus had suffered. And they reflect on Jesus suffering as “the nations raging.” And they’re identifying with that. They just experienced that kind of “raging” too —

Tim: Mhm, yeah.

Jon: —and having to go to prison—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: —and then afterwards, what they experience is the power of God descending on them and, like, “shaking the ground.” And all of a sudden they have this boldness.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Oh, okay. So in Psalm two, it’s like, the nations are raging, but God’s like, “I got a king. And this king, he’s the true source of power. And, like, the cosmos will bend to the will of the Son.” That’s kind of, like, the thrust of Psalm two.

Tim: Yeah, yeah. That’s right. Yeah.

Jon: And this is the apostles, like, identifying with that power. Like, “we’re experiencing the raging of the nations, but now we’re experiencing the, like, boldness of the king’s power—”

Tim: Yeah, yeah. That’s right.

Jon: “—who’s enthroned.”

Tim: So “the leaders gathered against your holy *servant*, Jesus,” singular.

Jon: Uh-huh. Okay.

Tim: Now, Acts 4:29, “Grant that your *servants*—”

Jon: “That’s us.”

Tim: “—may speak your word with confidence.”

Jon: “Give *us* the identity of the king.”

Tim: Yeah. So they’re—now a new group of leaders, and people and kings and nations are against us, just like they were against your servant. So now we’re your servants—I mean, that’s a request to live into their royal identity as the sons of God that doesn’t quote the “you are my Son” part—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: —but that’s the assumed—

Jon: Oh, interesting.

Tim: —interpretation, is that “what’s true of the Messiah is now true of us.”

Jon: Yeah. Hmm.

Tim: So *he* suffered resistance and hostility as your servant; now *we* are suffering as servants. And the *servant*, Jesus, is *the Son of God*; *the servants of Jesus* are—that, kind of like, follows the logic—*sons of God*.

Jon: Mhm. Yeah. Or, another way Paul will reflect on this is, being “a part of the body of Jesus,” or “united with Jesus.”

Tim: Yeah, there you go. That’s it.

Jon: “My life is now *in* Jesus.”

Tim: There you go.

Jon: So I can actually say, “I am the son of Psalm two—”

Tim: Totally.

Jon: “—because I’m united with Jesus.”

Tim: Yes. Yes, okay. So this same idea, this expanding of “who is the son of Psalm two,” then gets expanded to be “the sons and daughters of God, who are in the Messiah,” as it were. This is where we’ll end, from the last book of the Christian Bible, from the Revelation.

[Musical Break (59:22—59:50)]

Tim: So Jesus has seven speeches to seven churches at the beginning of the Revelation. And to the church in Thyatira, this is Revelation two, verse 18, Jesus says, “This is what the Son of God says, the one with eyes like fiery flame and his feet like blazing bronze.”

Jon: Hmm. So this is referring to Jesus?

Tim: It’s referring to Jesus. Yep.

Jon: Okay. Calling him “the Son of God.”

Tim: He is referring to himself in third person.

Jon: Jesus is saying, “I’m the Son of God. Here’s what I have to say.”

Tim: “Here’s what I have to say.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: “And I look like, you know, the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days of Daniel chapter seven.”

Jon: This is the fiery...

Tim: That’s the “eyes of fire, and feet like bronze;” that’s a hyperlink there. So he has a whole thing of what he says. At the end, what he says is, “Hey, hold on strong, until I come.” So he’s just telling them, “Be faithful”—this is down in verse 25—“and to the one who is victorious and who keeps doing my work until the very end, I will give that one *authority over the nations*, and he will shepherd the nations with an iron rod as the clay vessels are broken. And—oh—just like I have received that from my Father, and I will give them the morning star—”

Jon: Oh.

Tim: “—the one who has an ear, let them hear what the Spirit says.”

Jon: Okay. Wow. There’s a lot going on. But these are people who are being persecuted.

Tim: Ah, being persecuted and pulled into worshipping other gods at local, like, shrines.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: And then connected to that, all the partying and sex that happens at those temples, mhm.

Jon: And so it’s this call to...

Tim: “Don’t do that stuff.”

Jon: “Don’t do that stuff.”

Tim: “Be faithful to me.” Yeah.

Jon: And here's the promise. The promise is that "my authority as the Son," the authority that we read in Psalm two, "I'm going to give to you."

Tim: Mhm. "Authority over the nations; shepherding with an iron rod; broken clay vessels," is a quotation from *right after* the "you are my Son, today I've begotten you." It's from Psalm two, verse nine.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "You're going to have authority over the whole world." This is the Psalm two king, given authority over all the world. And then it specifically said, "will have an a rod of iron to, like, break the nations, shatter the nations."

Tim: Okay, well—this is so cool. Okay, so first of all, let's just notice—we'll talk about the "breaking, shattering" in a moment—but let's just notice, Jesus says, "I received this authority from my Father." So he's talking about his "eternal identity as the Son;" his "go time" from the baptism, his "go time" from the Mount of Transfiguration; his taking up the role of the human Son of God, king from the line of David; merging that with his eternal identity—so all of that: Jesus is the risen Lord of Heaven and Earth; he's the Son of God—so "that's what I have received from my Father," Jesus says. And what he says here is, "If you guys hang in there and actually live like who you are, I will give to you—"

Jon: "—that identity."

Tim: "—what is true of me."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then he quotes of Psalm two, which is a very specific, like, of the king being able "to rule the nations."

Tim: Totally. And in Psalm two, verse nine, in Hebrew, it says, "You will"—this verb, *ra'a*—"with an iron rod," and it can activate a Hebrew root: "to," like, "break into pieces."

Jon: Yeah. That's what Psalm two says, "You will shatter—"

Tim: "—shatter them with a rod of iron."

Jon: "—with a..." Alright.

Tim: However—this is so cool. So, those same Hebrew letters, *ra'a'*, are connected to what is a separate Hebrew root, *ra'ah* [the form in Psalm 2:9, *tero'em*, could be from either *ra'a'* or *ra'ah*] that means “to shepherd” or “to,” like, “guide a group of domestic animals” out into a field and give them food. So if we have the same Hebrew letters that actually have two different roots, those are called “homonyms.” Every language has homonyms. So John sees an opportunity here to highlight that: the Jesus of Nazareth “twist” on “shattering his enemies—”

Jon: Yeah, “How does Jesus rule?”

Tim: —Yeah, is “as a shepherd.”

Jon: “How does he shatter the nations?”

Tim: Yeah. So he “activates” the other meaning of this Hebrew root in light of a whole “shepherd theme” of the Messiah, in Ezekiel and in Jeremiah. So he’s “hyperlinking” too. It’s not just...

Jon: Hmm. So that’s not just wordplay.

Tim: No, he’s actually hyperlinking to the “shepherd-Messiah” motif of another section of the Prophets, but he does it by “tweaking” the Greek translation of the quotation of Psalm two.

Jon: Yeah, if you were to strictly quote Psalm two, it would be, “And he will shatter them with an iron rod.”

Tim: “With an iron rod.”

Jon: And he says, “He will shepherd them with an iron rod.”

Tim: That’s right. Yep. And most English translations here don’t do “shepherd.” They end up with, like, “rule—”

Jon: Oh.

Tim: “—rule them,” which metaphorically, you know, a shepherd is “ruling sheep.”

Jon: Sure.

Tim: But it actually is the word for, like, “be a shepherd-guide for animals.”

Jon: Yeah, because when we read Psalm two together, I was reflecting on, “This is intense.”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Right? Like, this isn't the nature of God" as I experience in Jesus of, like, just, the, like, mocking and the...

Tim: The "angry, quick temper."

Jon: Mhm. And just, "I've got this rod; I'm just going to go out and, just, break things."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: You see Jesus acting with compassion and love.

Tim: Yeah. Totally.

Jon: And bringing people in and restoring people.

Tim: Yeah. Calling himself "the Good Shepherd."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And feeding hungry people in the world.

Jon: So how does the Psalm two king actually rule the nations?

Tim: Yeah. Yes. So this is similar to the Mountain of Transfiguration, the way Luke switched the phrase, "the beloved Son" to "the chosen one," as a link to all these passages in Isaiah about "the suffering servant."

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: This is very similar, so John is making a little "tweak" to the quotation of Psalm two, but as a hyperlink to the image of the messianic "good shepherd" of Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34, and that Jesus, himself, called himself. So it's never one passage. It's always more. And it's not just cool, like, "nerd-artistry." They're doing theology when they're hyperlinking and making these little "tweaks." And what is theology? It's like, "Who is God? Who am I? What's wrong with us in the world? Is there any solution? And if so, what is the solution? And how is God bringing it about?" You know, like, those are the questions that the biblical authors get at. And they get at it by means of these interpretive moves.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: The many meanings of Psalm two, Jon—that's cool.

Jon: The many meanings, the many “layers.”

Tim: Many “layers of meaning,” actually. Yeah, thank you. My point isn’t that Psalm two can mean whatever you want it to mean.

Jon: Sure.

Tim: There’s, like, layers of meaning. There’s a basic meaning, and each layer on top of it is connected—right—to what’s under it. But it is also developing it, as the story unfolds a little more.

Jon: So we went through this whole journey. Psalm one on its own; Psalm two on its own; Psalm one and two together. And now we’re looking at Psalm two quoted in the New Testament. And each time, new meaning unfolds. Psalm one by itself is, kind of, to the common man, the everyday guy, saying, like, “You want success in life? You want the good life? Meditate on the instruction of God, the Torah of God, and you will be this, like, tree full of life.” And that’s this reflection on “the calling of humanity,” of being “the sons of God;” “the image of God.”

Tim: Yeah, yeah.

Jon: Like, we want to reflect God’s character and know good from bad. How do we do that? We need God’s voice, his wisdom, in our lives, that’s connecting us to the story of who humans are meant to be.

Tim: Mhm, yeah. Because there’s coming a moment of decision, of justice, and a sorting out, where destructive ways of being human won’t be allowed to vandalize the thing that God has in store in the future.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah.

Tim: Mhm. That stuff’s got to get left behind.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Wow, so you keep at it. “Don’t give up on this path.”

Tim: Yeah, that’s right.

Jon: Psalm two is talking about these violent, warrior-kings. It’s establishing God’s anointed king. And it’s also the same kind of reflection of, “there is a path of trying to

rule the world that's just going to lead to destruction, not just of yourself but of, like, others that you're subjugating."

Tim: Yeah. And on a large-scale level, "kings and nations."

Jon: And God is not going to put up with it. And then, in Psalm two, is this phrase that, then, the New Testament authors just keep, like, "mining" for meaning, which is this conversation that God had with the—

Tim: —within God's own self.

[Laughter]

Jon: With the eternal Son. "You are my Son. We're doing it. This is what it means."

Tim: "This is who you are."

Jon: "This is who you are. And this is what it means that you are loved."

Tim: "You are the one through whom I'm going to bring my authority over creation, over the nations."

Jon: So "how am I to, then, delight in God's wisdom in his Torah," Psalm one, and also "kiss the Son and identify with the Son," of Psalm two? And it all comes to: "embracing the identity of Jesus; making my identity the identity of Jesus."

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. If I really believe that I am a child of God, that my identity and my future is entirely determined by a move that God already made in partnership with the eternal Son, like, he's got me. I'm good. I'm good. Life is going to throw all kinds of stuff at me, and...but that doesn't call into question who I am and what God has in store. And that identity is being a son or a daughter of God, who's destined to have a role in creation, full of responsibility and meaning and purpose, and contribute to the larger community of good in the world. And there are parts of me and my life—and there's a part of my community or my nation, and the way we exist in the world—that, like, it's got to go. That is not going to contribute to eternal goodness. So that stuff's going to have to get left behind. And that's the calling, I think, of Psalm one and two.

[Laughter]

Tim: It's about the eternal Son of God. It's about Jesus, Messiah. It's about his life, death, and resurrection, and announcement of the kingdom of God. And it's about you and me as his followers. It's about everything. "One thing God has spoken; many things I've heard." Mmm.

Jon: Wow. Okay.

Tim: Psalm one and two.

Jon: Psalm one and two. Yeah, it doesn't feel like closure. It feels like the beginning of a way to start thinking.

Tim: Oh, right. Because it's just the first two poems of the Psalm scroll.

Jon: Right.

Tim: There's 148 more. And they are all interconnected like this, in little "bundles," and hyperlinked to each other, and then to the Torah and Prophets, and then the New Testament. We should talk about some more.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: In days to come.

Jon: One day.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: More Psalms.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Let's do that.

Jon: Deal.

[Musical Break 01:12:30—01:12:33]

Jon: Thanks for listening to BibleProject Podcast. And that's it for this short series on Psalm one and Psalm two. We'll be back to do more psalms in the future. Next week, we're going to start a new series on the 10 Commandments. Now, I have to admit that when Tim told me that we should study the 10 Commandments, I thought, "That actually sounds a little boring. How interesting can this really be?" But during those conversations, my mind was truly expanded, and I was challenged in so many ways. It was so fun, and I'm excited to share it with you. And that begins next week. 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 create 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.

Speaker one: Hi, we're a young adults group from Summerland Baptist Church in BC, Canada.

Speaker two: We first heard about the BibleProject as a youth.

Speaker three: Our church uses the BibleProject from as young as our children's ministry all the way up to our regular Sunday services.

Speaker four: My favorite thing about the BibleProject is the easy-to-understand, yet sophisticated messages and the intriguing animation.

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John Horton: Hey everyone, this is John 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 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, 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.

[Musical Finale (01:14:39—01:15:05)]