

[The Wilderness E13 QR Transcript]

[Intro (0:00—1:40)]

Tim: Hi, Jon.

[Laughter]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hey. Hi there.

Jon: I was wondering if you were going to do that.

[Laughter]

Tim: Mhm. Well, you were just looking at me, because normally you start, but you're—you know, but it's a Q and R episode, so things are a little different.

Jon: Great.

Tim: Hello.

Jon: Mix it up.

Tim: Hello.

Jon: Lovely.

Tim: And hello, everybody out there in the listening world to the BibleProject podcast. This is a Q and R episode where we are going to respond to your questions that you sent in about The Wilderness series.

Jon: Yes.

Tim: Came in for a landing on that one—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In as much as you can. I mean, it's the wilderness, so the point is, it's the in between where you haven't arrived.

[Laughter]

Tim: Anyway.

Jon: Yeah. How can you arrive when you're in the wilderness?

Tim: Mhm. Because that's not the point. The point is the journey and what it does to you.

Jon: Mhm. It was a great journey, going through the theme, and this will be a great opportunity to revisit a few things and hear how people have been reflecting—

Tim: Yep.

Jon: On the journey through the wilderness.

Tim: Yeah. So I feel like I say this every time because it's always true. One—uh—you all, the listening audience, are a really smart, perceptive group of people. And when you send in questions, I'm just like, "Wow, that's fantastic." Great observations, but great questions. So I'm really excited to dive in. We can't get to them all. We usually don't even get to all the ones I selected.

Jon: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: But we try and hit the main repeated themes in the questions and—uh—have a good time with it. So should we just get rocking?

Jon: Let's jump in.

Tim: Cool.

[Is Adam being formed outside of Eden a prototype of the wilderness pattern? (1:40—15:24)]

Tim: All right. Let's start with a question from Edwin, who lives in the Philippines.

Edwin: Hi, Tim and Jon. This is Edwin, from the Philippines. In light of the theme of the wilderness as a place of divine preparation where God forms people before leading them into the promised land, could Genesis chapter two, seven through eight, be read as a prototype of this pattern? Specifically, does the act of God forming Adam from dust and breathing into him the breath of life suggest not only physical animation but also moral or spiritual preparation for life in Eden? Thank you.

Jon: Oh, interesting. So is he asking—Adam being formed of the dust and then put in Eden—you could think of it as just being physically created, but is there something there to meditate on in—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Some sort of process of being prepared at that point to be put in the garden?

Tim: Yeah. It's a fantastic question. Just high five on a rad observation because you're pondering—there's all these stories later in the Bible about people going through hardship in the wilderness. It's dusty. It's dry. There's no water, no food, all that. And then, if you're going into a garden land, can we already see a pattern that that pattern was itself first laid out in the Eden creation story? So: definitely. I haven't come back and listened to the first couple episodes in *The Wilderness*—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: For a while, so I don't remember.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But if we didn't hit on these themes explicitly, then this is a great chance to now. So the first thing, Edwin, is: Absolutely, the prototype pattern is right there in Genesis. So a few things, Jon—I've got the story open in front of you—but—recall that the second creation story that begins in Genesis two, verse four, begins with no cultivated plants, like, no garden plants, no wild plants, no water, and no human. So there's four problems. No plants, no water—but then water comes up out of the ground. And the first thing God does is form human from the dust of the ground. So what we know about the dust of the ground is that it's lifeless unless there's water and God's breath is involved. And then he blows into the nostrils the breath of life. The man becomes a *nephesh*

*khayah*, a living being. Verse eight: “God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he put the human, whom he’d formed.” I have tried to point out this observation a lot over the years, that the human’s formed—

Jon: Outside of the garden.

Tim: Exactly.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And put inside.

Jon: Right. Now, the actual testing of the human happens in the garden.

Tim: Exactly. Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Where, in the theme of the wilderness, the testing we’ve been talking about is testing that happens outside of the garden.

Tim: Yep. That’s right.

Jon: I—

Tim: And that became kind of a main through line—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Through the whole conversation.

Jon: Yeah. If we failed the test in the garden, why would we pass the test in the wilderness?

Tim: Right. Yeah.

Jon: Or: Is it really kind of the same test whether you’re in the garden or in the wilderness?

Tim: Right.

Jon: It’s—the test is: Can I trust the voice of God?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: A—

Tim: Whether you have perhaps more good than is good for you—

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah, I—

Tim: Or whether you have an extreme lack of anything good—

Jon: Right.

Tim: The test remains the same. Yeah.

Jon: So I think the question was: Can we read into this moment of being created of the dust and then planted in the garden—is that journey from the dust to the garden—is there any sort of spiritual preparation happening at that moment? Is that the question?

Tim: Yeah. Is the breathing of God's breath into the human not just physical animation—you ask, Edwin—but a moral or spiritual preparation? I think why I appreciated your question was it's a question I've had to ask myself many times. When there's a pattern set up that repeats through many stories so that you have—whether it's Hagar in the wilderness or Moses in the wilderness or the Israelites in the wilderness—and these all map onto each other and there's often hyperlinks that are comparing—right—their experiences to each other and contrasting them, and then all of those are hyperlinked through different vocabulary on analogy back to the human—so the question is: How much of what happens in later repetitions of the pattern can I read back—

Jon: Right.

Tim: Into earlier repetitions of the pattern? That is a—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Really important—it's a question about reading and method. Like, how do you read this literature—

Jon: Right.

Tim: Well? Because oftentimes, for example, with the story of Solomon and his request for wisdom to discern between good and bad—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That gives you insight back into: "Oh, I wish Adam and Eve would have just done that when the snake—"right—"tried to deceive them."

Jon: I guess I'm imagining, then, a story being told of God taking Adam from the wilderness, planting him in the garden. And this whole journey, to me, that just, like, took him, put him in, now we're—

Tim: Right.

Jon: Going—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But is there a story there?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Is that what we're—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Meditating on?

Tim: So maybe—I'll add one more parallel, Edwin, that I think addresses what you're talking about. When you get to Ezekiel—and we did talk about these key passages in Ezekiel, probably pretty briefly because it's a huge book—we did talk about Ezekiel chapter 20, I remember, in episode whatever—uh—Ezekiel calls the Babylonian exile of Israel “the wilderness of the nations.” He uses that phrase.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's like a long wilderness. But then, there's these chapters of hope in 36 and 37 of Ezekiel. In 36, God says, “I'm going to take out your stony heart that would never listen to my commands and wisdom. I'm going to give you a new, fleshy heart. I'm going to put my Spirit in you.” It's very similar to the language of what God's doing to the human—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In Genesis two. And then you get—and you do mention this, Edwin—the—uh—valley of dry bones. In the next chapter, in Eze—Ezekiel 37, where there's a bunch of dead human—not even bodies—but just bones. And so first of all, the bones come back together and grow flesh—

[Laughter]

Tim: And you get these humans, but they're all just laying there lifeless on the ground, just like the clay human formed but lifeless on the ground in Genesis two. And then God breathes his breath into them, and they stand up, and they're ready to rock. A new human. And it's an image of God recreating Israel to be faithful covenant partners on the other side. So what's cool about that, Edwin, is that Ezekiel sees what you are seeing—

Jon: Huh.

Tim: Namely, that retelling the story of Israel to become God's faithful covenant partners who are dying in the wilderness of exile is like a recreation of them in that wilderness place to get put back into the new Eden. So how much of that moral and spiritual recreation should I be reading back into the Adam story? Here's my thought, Edwin.

Jon: Okay.

[Laughter]

Jon: Good. You have a thought?

Tim: I have a thought. But I wanted to paint all the, like—here's how I'm arriving at that thought—

Jon: Right.

Tim: Which was all of that prologue. So moral or spiritual preparation through a test is about God inviting me to grow and mature—right—and to become something that I'm not, presently.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: In that sense, what Israel has failed at in the garden, just like Adam and Eve did—the wilderness exile is kind of like the consequence of that decision—so they are in need of a really different way of valuing good and bad and God and—and so on. And so the wilderness and God recreating them is that moral and spiritual preparation. It doesn't seem like the human before the test at the tree in the garden needs—like, the test in the garden is the preparation.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Uhm—

Jon: That's where that story focuses.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. But the breathing in of the breath is a very suggestive. Like, it's obviously about life.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But it is also about God sharing with a dirt creature a kind of divine capacity—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: For responsibility, for choice, for partnership with God that is more than just, like, being physically animated. But it seems like what Ezekiel is saying is the breath of God is needed once humans have failed. And when God's creating the human, you know, in Genesis two, no—the human hasn't failed yet. So the test at the tree actually is the preparation, which brings us back to what we're saying. You can be tested in the garden. You can be tested in the wilderness. The test is really the same—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Th—like to help us grow.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. You know, we've talked a lot about how there's these other Second Temple texts of scribes who are thinking about a biblical passage and poking at it and saying, "Well, what if—"you know, like—

Tim: Oh, yeah. Yeah. The what-if—

Jon: The what-if—

Tim: Scenar—scenario.

Jon: Passages—

Tim: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Jon: That don't end up in your Bible, but these were things that people read—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Meditated on and thought about as a way to kind of continue to think about the wisdom of these stories.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. That's right.

Jon: And so—

Tim: Yeah.



Jon: You know, an example of that would be in the—the ascension of Moses. Is that what it's called?

Tim: Hmm. The ascension of Moses or the testament of Moses.

Jon: The testament of Moses.

Tim: Yeah. That—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We talked about—

Jon: Well—

Tim: Recently in—

Jon: And it'll—

Tim: Another conver—

Jon: Yeah, it'll actually come out in—

[Laughter]

Jon: Next year—

Tim: Later, yeah.

Jon: When we talk about it in—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Detail. But there's this moment where Moses dies, and then he's buried, and we don't know where he's buried.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Right?

Tim: This is talked about at the end of Deuteronomy.

Jon: That's in Deuteronomy.

Tim: And the d—

Jon: So that's in—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The passage.

Tim: And it says, “Nobody knows where he’s buried.”

Jon: Nobody knows.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So then some—kind of just some literary, nerdy, like, God-fearing—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Scribes are like, “Huh, I wonder what that story is.”

Tim: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Jon: And then they do just kind of an imaginative exploration, and then you get that scroll of the testament of Moses.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And what they’re doing is they’re further reflecting—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: On these biblical motifs—

Tim: Yep. Yeah.

Jon: That are all through the Bible.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Anyways, I just bring it up because what this question has done has made me think about: What is the story between Adam being formed and put in the garden? Because it could have been as simple as God just—pzzt—puts him there. But what if he had to, like, take a couple day hike into that—

Tim: Oh—

Jon: Garden?

Tim: Yeah. Sure.

Jon: Like, to find his way to the garden, he actually had to listen to the voice of God and follow the voice of God into the garden? There—like this training time, where once he gets to the garden, you know—

[Laughter]

Jon: He's had all this practice listening to the voice of God. And you're like, "Oh, yeah—" like—"how wonderful it is to be that in tune with the voice of God." And then he gets there—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And now the tree—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Is such a—

Tim: Ooh, that's good, Jon, because—

Jon: More—

Tim: Maybe—

Jon: Important note.

Tim: Yeah, because, let's say it was a—a five-day hike—

[Laughter]

Tim: To get into the garden. Then that would have been five days of the human looking around, and saying, like, "Man, it's lifeless out here."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "Man, I'm thirsty."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "Man, I'm hungry. Without God helping me, I'm dead."

Jon: Right.

Tim: “I’m done for.” And then you would get to the garden, and you’re like, “Ah, thank you.” And “I’ll listen to you, now, since you led me to the good stuff.”

Jon: Right.

Tim: So it seems like the dynamic of the Adam and Eve story is exactly that—that Adam and Eve are portrayed—not knowing good or bad is a phrase used that Moses uses in Deuteronomy chapter one to describe children—

Jon: Mhm. Yeah.

Tim: Like, moral infants. They haven’t had enough practice at knowing what’s good or bad—

Jon: Right.

Tim: To make the right call.

Jon: They haven’t made any call on their own—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yet.

Tim: But they—they just woke up in a garden—

Jon: Did they?

Tim: Full of food.

Jon: I guess that’s the question.

[Laughter]

Jon: Did they just wake up in the garden—

Tim: Ah, I see—

Jon: Or was there—

Tim: I see.

Jon: This little journey to the garden?

Tim: Well, the fact that they fail at least means that they didn’t fully appreciate the abundance that God provided—

Jon: Right.

Tim: Them because—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: They thought they had a better idea of what to do with it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mhm. I see. But yeah, you could imagine a what-if there.

Jon: Yeah. It's the what-if that—I think it's okay for us to have those what-if moments—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And think about it, because I think the point here is: The way the wilderness is—there is a journey from the wilderness into the garden. And for us to then think: Okay, well, what would that have been for Adam who didn't know good from bad yet and all he could do was listen to the voice of God?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: What would that have—journey been like into the garden?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: If there was a journey.

Tim: Yeah, that's—yeah.

Jon: It's just, kind of—I don't know.

Tim: That's great.

Jon: I think Edwin just allowed me to imagine that for a second—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And it just—

Tim: I love that.

Jon: Kind of a fun little thought experiment.

Tim: No, it's good. I think—so what we're getting into is, in that imaginative experiment—and this is what Ezekiel is doing with Genesis, and it's what the story of Moses is doing in relationship to Genesis—is that the biblical narratives are a way to ponder the real-life questions and circumstances that we all find ourselves in. And they're like, "Think about it this way."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And the stories are not just telling us about an interesting thing that happened. The interesting things that happened are framed in such a way that we meditate on the bigger questions. And that's a really good example of it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. So thanks—

[Laughter]

Tim: Thanks, Edwin.

[Is the cherubim's fiery sword at the entrance of Eden purification imagery? (15:24—26:03)]

Tim: And actually, your question, Edwin, and the conversation we just had, really links well into the question that we got from Natalie in—uh—Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

Natalie: Hello, my name is Natalie Fox. I'm from Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. In episode eight of The Wilderness, you mentioned that going through the fire is purification imagery. I have a hunch that the fiery sword that was to guard the way to the tree of life is connected to this purification, since the humans were in the wilderness landscape. Can you connect these dots? Thank you for all you do.

Tim: Mmm.

Jon: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah, that's great.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And I have heard you, kind of—maybe you didn't use the word purification, but you've talked about this idea of the fiery sword—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Be—going through death.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: If you want to go back into the garden—if you're going through a fiery sword—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That's going to destroy—

Tim: Yeah—

Jon: You in some way.

Tim: A human going into a whirling sword or into a fire usually means—

Jon: Done for.

Tim: Yeah. You're done—you're done for. Uhm—yes. Yeah, exactly. So a couple thoughts. One: let's just think about: The sword and the fire appear along with the cherubim, the angelic bouncers—

[Laughter]

Tim: Who were put at the boundary of Eden when Adam and Eve are exiled. So they are outside the garden. They're still in the land of Eden, because it's Cain that's exiled east of Eden, like, outside of Eden itself. So they're still in the region of Eden, but they are outside, and it's apparently the realm of thorns and thistles, you know, from what God said in Genesis three. So they are in a wilderness landscape, as it were. They are separated from the garden of life. So they're in the place of the consequence of having failed the test of trust.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And then the wilderness is going to provide them and their—right—their descendants lots of testing moments. So already, they're in the realm associated with test, the wilderness. And then to get back into the garden land, you have to go through either the sword or the fire. And absolutely, fire imagery—it's really cool, if you wanted,

you could get some kind of concordance, a digital concordance, and where—in the Psalms, but especially the Prophets, how fire imagery is used in the Prophets, especially Zephaniah of all places, has some really cool fire imagery. And the way that it functions is that it seems like it kills and destroys everything. But then there is a version of the faithful remnant that goes through the fire that appears out the other side in a more faithful state where they do right by God and others. And this is surely what the story of Daniel's friends who go into the furnace of Babylon also—they go in and they go out of it, and they come out more loyal and dedicated to the God of Israel. So fire and sword are purification definitely. So the one way to think about the whole wilderness period is it's like a purifying fire or a cutting away, which is an interesting way to think about it. A couple of other connections, one in Isaiah 43—he talks about how Israel's exile to Babylon is like going through the fire. He talks about it. And he talks about going through the rivers.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And—

[Laughter]

Tim: Uh—

Jon: Yeah, flood or fire, or—

Tim: Flood and fire.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. And both are a purification. And I'm thinking also of—uh—nu, nu, nu—oh, in the story of Abraham, when Abraham picks up the knife and the fire—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: To take up to Mount Moriah with—

Jon: The eater?

Tim: With Isaac. Yeah. The knife is called “the eater,” “the thing that consumes.” But you know, a common phrase that we use for swords that have sharp edges on both sides—

Jon: Oh, mhm.

Tim: We call it a two-edged sword.



Jon: Yep.

Tim: But in the Hebrew Bible, it's called a two-mouthed sword—

Jon: Oh. Okay.

Tim: Because it eats, mostly—well, if it's a sword for battle, it eats flesh. So he has the eater in his hand. And then Isaac—this is Genesis 22, verse seven—Isaac said, “Ah, look, here's the fire and here's the wood. But where's the lamb for the burnt offering?”

Jon: So Abraham—

Tim: Abraham—

Jon: Takes the fire and the knife—

Tim: Yes. Yeah.

Jon: And then later, we also learn that there's the wood.

Tim: That there's wood, because, yeah, he had put the wood on—on Isaac's shoulders. So it's really interesting that the fire and the sword both play a role in this story.

Jon: Fire and a knife.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: And then there's a flaming sword at the garden. This—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Is—is this a hyperlink to that?

Tim: This is—well, because he's ascending a high place.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: And there's going to be an angel up there that he meets who's going to say, like, “Don't use that knife on your son.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So this is Abraham's ultimate purification test.

Jon: Interesting.

Tim: And this is where he passes his test, because he's willing to surrender his son back to God, who gave him his son. And God both gives him back the life of his son, and provides, as it were, the ram in the bush who was offered in the place of his son. So Isaac does kind of die—

[Laughter]

Tim: In a way. And Abraham, in his son dying, is himself dying because that's—future—

Jon: How does he sort of die?

Tim: Oh, symbolically, because—

Jon: He's handed over?

Tim: Abraham was willing to give the life of Isaac back to God.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Or as the author of Hebrews says, "It's as if Abraham received Isaac back from the dead." Interesting little medi—meditation.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So my point is that the fire and the sword play a key role—

Jon: It's interest—

Tim: Where Abraham meets an angelic figure on a high place at his ultimate test.

Jon: Okay. So in—in Genesis three, the angelic figure, the cherubim, are placed there at the gate. So right there on the entrance to Eden, not an angel, but a cherubim, spiritual being, flame and sword on a high place to enter into—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Essentially, the place of God's—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Presence.

Tim: Because of their failure at a tree.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah. And so when you get to the Abraham story and Abraham is bringing fire—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And sword, essentially, up to that place to make a sacrifice, those two—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Worlds are merging in a way.

Tim: Yeah. Those two stories. It's another example, back to Edwin's question, of, like, a parallel moment where the story of Genesis 22 has been shaped with all this vocabulary to help us imagine that this is, as it were, Adam and Eve reapproaching Eden and doing the right thing of surrendering the fruit. Th—s—good—what is Isaac except the fruit of Abraham and Sarah?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And he gives the fruit back to God. And God says, "Actually, I'll let you keep your fruit—"

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "Your son." Uh—and they meet together and—God and—and Abraham meet each other on the high place there. So the author shaped it as, like, his success, his passing —

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Of the test. Mhm.

Jon: Yeah. So the way that the fire and sword work in Genesis three—it feels like: "Stay out. This is just a—"

Tim: I see.

Jon: "Barrier, now."

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: "This is off limits now."

Tim: I see. Yeah.

Jon: Where purification isn't "Stay out," it's, "Go through—"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: “But it’s going to be painful.”

Tim: It’s—yeah. Sure.

Jon: An—

Tim: And maybe—yeah, you’re right. When you’re just at Genesis three, the meaning of the fire and sword could have multiple layers of meaning as you go on through the story.

Jon: As you go on through the story, back to this imaginative thinking about these stories, are you supposed to imagine: What if Adam and Eve went back and somehow went through the fire?

Tim: Right. Right.

Jon: What would that have looked like?

Tim: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. And I think that is what is on the mind, say, of the author of Daniel, and why the story of them going through the fire and coming out the other side —

Jon: Yeah. With some angels there.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah, or why, you know, the poet in Isaiah 43 talked about the Babylonian exile as going through a fire.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So fire imagery is that it really does destroy something, but it destroys something that cannot endure the fire. But apparently—

Jon: Something can endure.

Tim: God has created human beings in a way that they image something that can endure through the fire. And what else can endure fire, except—

Jon: Except?

Tim: Well, either precious metals—

[Laughter]

Tim: They get melted down—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: That—Isaiah uses fire imagery to talk about. Uh—I think essentially what it is is light, like, the fire itself. You become the fire. “Our God is a consuming fire—”

[Laughter]

Tim: And—we become the fire. I think this is why resurrection imagery is almost always associated with shining and brightness—is—you actually become one with the fire.

[Laughter]

Jon: Okay.

[Laughter]

Tim: Just to throw that out there.

Jon: One with the fire.

Tim: Yeah. I mean, I—I’m speaking—

Jon: Yes.

Tim: In just the—

Jon: In metaphors—

Tim: Biblical images—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Here—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That the righteous in the resurrection will shine like stars in the sky, like the angels.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Anyway, I just took that—

[Laughter]

Jon: Resurrection bodies—

Tim: A whole other direction.

Jon: Let's just think about that for a second.

Tim: Yeah. But the point is that whatever is a part of me that's connected to disordered desires that drag me back into the dust—

Jon: Ah.

Tim: But I think I need them to stay—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Alive—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That stuff's got to—

Jon: Can you r—

Tim: Go.

Jon: Can you rid yourself of that?

Tim: Can you—yeah.

Jon: And how?

Tim: Mhm. Yes. And that—this was where we got to the stuff about—where the starvation or being hungry and thirsty in the wilderness can be a kind of gift even though it's very unpleasant, because it's teaching you about—

Jon: Yeah, you can practice not needing that.

Tim: Mhm, yeah—

Jon: The thing we think—

Tim: The stuff we think keeps us alive—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Food, sex, our children, in terms of keeping our name alive for the future—what really keeps us alive is the word of God. And the first word of God is, “Let the divine fire shine into the darkness.”

[Laughter]

Jon: “Let there be light”?

Tim: “Let there be light.”

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Well—

Tim: Well, that got interesting.

Jon: I think we should—

[Laughter]

Jon: Stop there.

Tim: Okay. Uhm—

[Is there a hyperlink between Nabal and Laban—and therefore, between David and Jacob’s wilderness stories? (26:03—37:14)]

Tim: We g—uh—had a short but really fun conversation about David.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And—

Jon: That was a cool episode.

Tim: Ah, the stories of David are so cool. I want to spend a lot more time there in years to come, Jon. So we covered really just one story—

Jon: Right.

Tim: In detail, First Samuel 25. So let’s hear a question about that story from Ifreke, who lives in Georgia.

Ifreke: Hi, Tim and Jon. This is Ifreke Umana, from Lawrenceville, Georgia, and what interested me about your episode with Naval is that I realized that, when spelled backwards, can also spell Lavan from the Jacob story. So I’m interested if there is an intentional hyperlink between Jacob and—and David’s story with how they both had to flee from people trying to kill them, and work among shepherds, and also receive mistreatment from Lavan and Naval, respectively. All right, thank you.

Jon: Hmm. That’s interesting.

Tim: Mhm. Dude, Ifreke, double—

[Laughter]

Tim: Triple gold star, man. I love that. I love that you noticed that. I just feel really happy about that—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Because you’re a hundred percent right.

Jon: Really?

Tim: Yeah. Yes. So Naval—



Jon: Because, remind me, Nabal means—uhm—

Tim: “Malicious idiot.”

Jon: Malicious idiot.

Tim: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: And—

Jon: Uhm—

Tim: Yeah, Lavan is, both in Hebrew and in English, the name Naval backwards.

Jon: Yeah. Does Lavan have a name meaning?

Tim: Oh, Lavan is the root word for—uhm—white.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: A shade of white, which also is a wordplay at work in the Jacob and Lavan stories too.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Laban is how—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: A lot of people say his name. So you’re a hundred percent right. There’s an important set of hyperlinks and parallels between David fleeing from Saul, and then he meets Naval, and then he has to flee from Saul some more on the other side—and that is all set on parallel to Jacob fleeing from his brother Esau who’s trying to kill him. And then he goes into exile, meets a guy named Lavan, which is Naval backwards—

[Laughter]

Jon: Or Laban as—

Tim: Yeah, Laban.

Jon: You might know him.

Tim: And then when Jacob leaves Laban, then he goes back and he encounters Esau again and thinks that Esau is going to kill him—

Jon: Right.

Tim: But he doesn't. So this has to do—hmm, how do you say? There's a whole section of Jacob's story, his exile—because—into the east because of his brother's threats to murder him—his long sojourn-exile—20 years in the east—where he is—end up as a slave essentially to his uncle Laban. And then he goes back to meet Esau. And each part of that sequence is hyperlinked. And there's all these very unique vocabulary and theme parallels to David's—

Jon: Huh.

Tim: Journey from Saul. It's like whoever wrote that section—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Of David's flight from Saul has the Jacob story on the brain—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And keeps making hyperlinks to really unique words, but in order—in the same order of the Jacob—

Jon: Oh—

Tim: Story.

Jon: Interesting.

Tim: It's super cool. So you'd notice the name. So I did a little project on this a number of years ago, so I have a handy-dandy chart—

Jon: Okay.

[Laughter]

Tim: To look at. So remember that the whole thing about Jacob and Esau is that Jacob is the younger, but he was chosen to actually inherit the blessing over and above his older brother, which has also got Cain—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And Abel stuff written all over it.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Uhm—

Jon: And also a David-and-Saul kind of.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Yeah?

Tim: Yeah, exactly.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Yeah, totally. So in a similar way, Saul is jealous of David—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And all the fame and favor that he's getting. And so he starts—uhm—trying to kill him. So for example, in the story right before David and Naval in First Samuel 24—is where—we actua—we talked about this because David was hiding in a cave. Saul went in to go to the bathroom—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And David doesn't kill him. Saul comes out, and David has this speech, and he's like, "Saul." And the whole focus of that is, when Saul hears David speaking to him from the cave, he says, in First Samuel 24, "Is this your voice, my son, David?" And then Saul realizes that it's David and that David spared his life. And so Saul lifted up his own voice, and he—uh—he wept. Similarly, when Jacob is deceiving his old, blind father, Isaac, with the food—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So that he can get the blessing and the promise, you know, that's for his older brother—and Isaac is blind. He can't see anymore.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: And so what he asks is he says—uhm—"Is that you, my son, Esau?" And Jacob says, like, "Yeah, it's me. It's Esau." And you know, he famously puts on, like, the goat—

Jon: Animal—

Tim: Skins or whatever.

Jon: Skins, yeah.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. And so what Isaac says is, “Well, the voice is the voice of Jacob. But what I feel like, and the food that I smell, sure seems like it’s coming from Esau.” So it’s all about the voice is the thing that gives it away.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So there’s little clues like that that run parallel through, but especially in the story of Naval paralleling Lavan, because both—Naval is a shepherd with lots of flocks. In fact, there’s a sheep shearing festival that’s at the center of the story of David and Naval. Similarly, Lavan is a shepherd, and there’s a sheep shearing festival that’s at the very center of the story of Jacob and Lavan. So actually, it would just be a fun homework assignment. Go read Genesis, like, 25 through 32, and then go read First Samuel 24 to 26, and just start noticing all the parallel vocabulary, and it’ll just—like, it’s off the charts. It’s super fun.

Jon: And why?

Tim: Oh, sure.

Jon: Why—why do that?

Tim: Yeah. That’s great. S—but it’s back to the first question. When biblical authors are setting characters or stories in parallel to each other, the point isn’t just so that it’s fun.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The point is that the comparison and the contrast will teach you wisdom by comparing their different life stories. It’s the same thing of when we watch a really powerful movie.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And we’re watching someone’s story, but the reason we find it compelling is because we see ourselves in it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And my life isn’t identical to any powerful movie character I’ve ever seen, but it’s similar enough that I can learn wisdom—uh—from it. So like, a difference between David and Jacob is David hasn’t deceived anybody. And so all the wrong coming towards him is because of, you know, Saul’s treachery and selfishness and Naval’s treachery and selfishness. For Jacob, it’s the inverse—is that he’s the problem—

[Laughter]

Tim: And his father, Isaac, and his brother Esau, like, aren't great people, but Jacob is very much the creator of his own wilderness experience, right? That's a meaningful contrast. Like, "Oh, sometimes I can end up in the wilderness because of my own folly. Sometimes I can end up in the wilderness because of somebody else's folly." And I think both of those—right—give you perspective on how—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: To think about your own wilderness—

Jon: Right.

Tim: Something like that.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I guess my point is is that the narrative parallels are in the service of the same thing you were doing earlier—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: With thinking about how the story of Adam and Eve might be paralleled by the story of Moses or something like that.

Jon: Right.

Tim: The stories are vehicles to teach us wisdom.

Jon: Yeah. So it's cool that this came out of a wordplay on the name.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: It was the—kind of the first clue.

Tim: Oh, yeah, it is. It's a little, like, low-hanging fruit.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. Yes.

Jon: Yeah, that's really fascinating. And then you're saying you go and just watch how it's not just the name, there's a lot of vocabulary—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Key vocabulary like the voice, that then will share in each story.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And you're saying that the vocabulary actually happens in order—

Tim: In order.

Jon: So it feels very intentional.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: And the fact that they're both shepherds.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And there's a sheep shearing—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Festival.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And—so all of those details are saying, “Dear reader, pay attention to and think about these sets of stories together. And as you do, think about the similarities and differences. And as you do, you're going to—”

Tim: Ooh. Mhm.

Jon: “Find God's wisdom.”

Tim: Yes, exactly. That is part of how the stories do their work.

Jon: I never learned that at Sunday school.

Tim: No—

[Laughter]

Tim: But hopefully a whole new generation will because—I have been waiting for the day that I could share this news.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So there's a Hebrew Bible scholar, Seth Postell, who I've learned a lot from over the years. He and I both had the same really formative teacher back in the day—uh—John Sailhamer, who taught me probably the most important things I ever learned about how to read the Hebrew Bible.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So Seth Postell was also a student of Sailhamer's back in the day.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: And Seth has done us the favor of writing the first accessible, introductory, kind of like, handbook on hyperlinking—

Jon: Oh, yeah?

Tim: That I am so thrilled to recommend to people now.

Jon: Cool.

Tim: It just released, real-time, like, eight days ago, November 4th, 2025—

Jon: Oh, no way.

Tim: Yeah—called *The Art of Narrative Analogy: Identifying and Interpreting Parallel Passages in the Bible*. So Seth walks through in a very fun way—he uses Star Wars and Lord of the Rings—

[Laughter]

Tim: As kind of like—

Jon: Of course.

Tim: The main illustrations.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So it's written for a very accessible audience. If you've ever wanted to kind of deepen your understanding or sharpen your toolkit of how to identify hyperlinks and then what to do with them, like your question—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Uh—this is a book-length treatment—

Jon: Cool.

Tim: Of that. And it st—

Jon: This is not an academic book? This is more of a popular-level book?

Tim: Oh, I mean, it's about hyperlinking in the—

[Laughter]

Tim: Bible.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So—

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So it is nerdy in the sense of, it's about that, but it's not—you don't have to know Greek or Hebrew.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's written for a wide—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Audience, and—

Jon: Cool.

Tim: It's easy to read. You'll learn a ton. And it's the book that I wished for many years—

Jon: Nice.

Tim: Existed.

Jon: Great. Do you have it?

Tim: I do, actually, because—uh—I—uh—I wrote a little—

Jon: You wrote a blurb.

Tim: Short—short little paragraph—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: To endorse it, because—

Jon: Yeah.



Tim: It's such a fantastic little book.

Jon: That's awesome.

Tim: Mhm, yeah. Uh—but it's really great. So if you wanted, for example, to follow—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Through this parallel between David and Naval and Jacob and Laban, you could do it on your own. You could also get Seth's book and then do it.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And I bet you would notice a lot more and get a lot more insight out of it.

Jon: Awesome.

Tim: Yep.

[Why Is There Wilderness Imagery in the Lord's Prayer? (37:14—46:07)]

Tim: Okay. Let's—uh—move into some questions that arose out of our conversations about Jesus in the wilderness. We did multiple episodes. And the wilderness comes up a lot in the gospels. So we have a question from—

[Laughter]

Tim: I'm pretty sure this isn't your real name—Darndest Dabbler, which is just a fantastic name, but it's also your email address, so my hunch is your real name's a mystery. And that's okay, because, Darndest Dabbler, you have a really great question about the wilderness in the—the teachings of Jesus.

Darndest Dabbler: Hi, Tim and Jon Collins. Darndest Dabbler from Connecticut. Although Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom of God has arrived, the daily prayer that he prescribes for us has some wilderness in it. What's up with that? Thank you, and thank you for all you do.

[Laughter]

Tim: What's up with that?

Jon: Mmm. Is that the daily bread?

Tim: Yeah. I pull—I pulled it up here.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Uh—the Lord's Prayer.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mhm. So we should just say it together.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: All right. This is in the Lexham English Bible version, but—uh—“Our Father, who is in Heaven, may your name be treated as holy.” Whoa, that's almost exactly how we translated it—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: In our translation. “May your Kingdom come, may your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us, today, our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. Don't bring us into—”they render “temptation.” It's the same word as test. I'm going to say test—

Jon: Yep.

Tim: Uh—“but deliver us from the evil one.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So you're hearing—well, first of all, Darndest Dabbler—

Jon: Yeah. He didn't tell us.

Tim: He didn't tell us. So Jon, your hunch is that the wilderness has come up—

Jon: The daily bread—

Tim: Yep.

Jon: That's wilderness.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The bread of the moment.

Tim: That's exactly right.

Jon: What—what do I need in this moment?

Tim: Mhm. So you're referring to the manna—the stories about the pr—providing—

Jon: Yes.

Tim: God providing manna—

Jon: Right.

Tim: In the wilderness, which is daily, every day.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah, just enough for the day.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: You're not storing it up—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: You're just—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Day by day, what do I need today?

Tim: It gets wormy if you store it up.

[Laughter]

Tim: Which, you know, worms are kind of just like little tiny snakes.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: No—why worms? It's mentioned that the Israelites who kept the manna—

Jon: Because it could've been—

Tim: More than one day—

Jon: Like, it could have been just bacteria, you're saying? It could have been like—

Tim: Yeah, why mention—

Jon: Beetles—

Tim: Little—little slithery worms, except to echo the snake?

Jon: Okay.

Tim: They're listening to the snake, saying, "God won't provide enough for you. You better get two days' worth." Anyway.

Jon: Okay. So daily bread—

[Laughter]

Tim: Yep.

Jon: Uh—and then, the test.

Tim: "And b—do not bring us into the test."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Now, one large point of the discussion was, the test happens in the garden, and it happens in the wilderness.

Tim: And it happens in the wilderness.

Jon: How are you going to pass the test in the garden? Well, maybe by learning to pass it in the wilderness first.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Because—and then maybe you can handle the garden. So I guess the test could really be in either. But the point here is, there's some wilderness themes in the prayer. And the question is, if the Kingdom of God has arrived—

Tim: Right.

Jon: Does that—

Tim: Which—

Jon: Mean the garden has arrived?

Tim: That's right. Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: And if the garden has arrived, why would I be asking for daily bread? Wouldn't I just be like—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "Thanks for all the wonderful trees—"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "That I can eat from"?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Because in the—in the manna story that's being echoed by the daily bread, the Israelites are in the wilderness. They're in it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And they would die if they don't have bread. But the bread—you know, it's called the bread of Heaven, the bread from the skies.

[Laughter]

Tim: And it has a mysteriously—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Shiny qualities about it. It's like resin—right—that glints in the sun or something.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: It's like—it's—why is it described that way, you know?

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So it is a little Eden gift as it—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Were, but it's in the wilderness setting. So may—I think, Darndest Dabbler—

[Laughter]

Tim: I just like—

[Laughter]

Tim: Saying your name—

[Laughter]

Tim: I think what you're noticing and naming—like, "What's up with the fact that the Kingdom of God has arrived—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "But I'm still in the wilderness?" I mean, I—it's a great way of just naming the dynamic of—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The Kingdom of God is here—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In moments, in foretastes—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In experiences, but it has yet to envelop and recreate the whole cosmos. And—

Jon: So an Israelite going out and gathering some manna, picking it up, looking at it, marveling at it, could go, "Ah, the Kingdom of the skies has arrived."

Tim: Yeah. The bread—

Jon: Or the bread of—

Tim: The bread of the skies.

Jon: "The bread of—"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "The skies has arrived."

Tim: This is it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. It arrived. The—

Jon: And—

Tim: Bread of the skies has arrived.

Jon: And—and I only need to take what I need right now.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: You know, I was also reflecting on how, you know, in the garden, Adam and Eve aren't collecting fruit, right? They don't have to store fruit. It's just always on the trees.

Tim: Totally. Yeah.

Jon: So what do I want to eat today? Like, I'll just choose my tree—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And I'll eat it.

Tim: Yeah. Totally.

Jon: So you're not storing up.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: And so it's the fruit of the moment in the garden. It's the same thing, but you're just surrounded by it. Versus the manna, it's like you're surrounded by desert.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The temptation is: Okay, maybe I do need to store this up.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: But in both, is the temptation—is—hmm—can I trust that God will give me what I need, or do I take what I think I need? Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. That's exactly right. So the Lord's Prayer, then, is training us to think of myself every day as being in that wilderness generation. The Kingdom of God has arrived. I mean, my goodness, he liberated us from slavery in Egypt. God is king. Those are the final words of the worship song that the people sing in Exodus 15 after they walk through the sea—is: "Yahweh reigns as king." That's the final line. So it's the

King of the cosmic Kingdom leading us through the wilderness. And he gives us just what we need for each day. So Lord's Prayer—whether you—my life happens to be surrounded by abundance or surrounded by a lack of abundance, or maybe—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I'll go—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I'll go through both in my lifetime, the Lord's Prayer is teaching me to see, I'm always actually sojourning in the wilderness with the cosmic King—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: With me.

Jon: Well, you could also imagine Adam and Eve praying this prayer.

Tim: Totally.

Jon: Right?

Tim: Yeah. Yes.

Jon: It still works. You know, "Give me today—"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "The fruit I need today."

Tim: Yep.

Jon: Like—

Tim: Yeah, g—

[Laughter]

Jon: You know?

Tim: Yeah. Totally.

Jon: That could be their prayer.

Tim: "Give me today my daily fruit."

Jon: Yeah.



[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And—uhm—

Tim: Yeah. I love that.

Jon: And “Don’t—I know there’s that tree you told me not to—so—don’t—you know, don’t lead me into the test.”

Tim: “Don’t lead me into the test, please—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And—

Jon: “Deliver me from the evil one.”

Tim: But man—

Jon: “The evil one’s here whispering into my ear—”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Like, “Don’t just trust that God has enough for you. There’s something he’s holding out on you.”

Tim: Totally.

Jon: This could’ve been their prayer.

Tim: Yeah. That’s right.

Jon: So it’s not a wilderness prayer. It’s a garden prayer.

Tim: Mmm. Oh, it’s a test prayer. It’s a—

Jon: It’s a test prayer.

Tim: It’s a—I guess it’s a prayer of those facing the test. But it’s true, because if I’m in the garden, I still want to view all that abundance as daily provision.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: And I think it's why—I think the wisdom of Jesus' teachings, I think, is teaching us that even when we do have material abundance—to—hmm—treat it and do with it—whatever it takes so that it doesn't catch a hold of my desires and my heart.

Jon: Mhm. Do you have to pray this prayer once you're in new creation?

Tim: Hmm. That's—what a fantastic question. I don't think so.

Jon: The ultimate garden.

Tim: I don't think so. Because the idea is that if every creature is so satisfied—all our desires are satisfied with the presence, and power, and goodness of God intimately, then why would I desire anything you have and do wrong to you that all of a sudden I need to ask for your forgiveness anymore?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Maybe another way to say it is, you can't help but pray this prayer.

Tim: Oh, what do you mean?

Jon: The prayer is so in tune with your spirit that you're not trying to pray the prayer. Your—your life is the prayer.

Tim: Whoa. You're saying because you're living out the desire to only depend on—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And live by the creative word and goodness of God—

Jon: And escape every false temptation to not do that.

Tim: Yeah. That's great. Thanks for that, Jon.

[Does Jesus have a wilderness testing moment in Gethsemane? (46:07—1:02:35)]

Tim: Uhm—this is a great chance to go to the question that we got from—uh—Gareth, who lives in Leeds in the United Kingdom. Uh—you ask a great question about Jesus in the garden.

Gareth: Hi, Jon and Tim. This is Gareth, from Leeds, in the UK. You've mentioned a few times in this series that the wilderness is often a place in which people are required to learn to trust God and his will to see whether you're ready to be in the garden. In reading the passion narrative, I wondered whether there was a wilderness moment for Jesus when he was in the garden of Gethsemane, because at that moment, he felt separation from the Father, and he needed to place his trust in the Father so that he could submit to the Father's will rather than his own. Is the Father testing Jesus at this moment, or is Jesus showing us that the way to trust God in our wilderness times is by submitting everything to his will? Thank you for everything that you and the whole BibleProject team do. God bless you all.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's fantastic.

Jon: So there, Jesus is praying the prayer, right?

Tim: Well—thank you.

Jon: Right?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Well, you're remembering our conversations about that.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And it's kind of cool to think about how he probably couldn't help but pray the prayer. You know, like, he was so one with the Father—

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. So this is the story where—Matthew 26—we'll look at his version—this is verse 36. "Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane." It's actually the Gospel of John that calls it, like, a garden orchard. And Gethsemane is a Greek spelling of the Hebrew phrase—uh—*gat shemen*, which is the pressing floor for olive oil. So it was like where you would stomp on the olives and the oil would start to drain out. So it was an olive orchard.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And he said, "Sit over here," to the disciples, "While I go over there and pray." But then he took along Peter, and James, and John. And he quotes from a psalm because he's got those in his blood. "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death." That comes from Psalm—I think—42. Uh—"He went a little ways, and said, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.'" That's a whole hyperlink back to his cup in baptism. But then he says, "Nevertheless, not what I desire, but what you desire."

Jon: And you're looking at a translation that says, "Not what I will, but as you—"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "Will"?

Tim: And le—

Jon: And that's how I typically have ever heard the story.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "Not my will, but your will be done—"

Tim: Exactly. Yes.

Jon: Is the classic rendering of that.

Tim: That's right. It's exactly the same Greek phrases from the Lord's Prayer.

Jon: And that's the point.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Which, in the Lord's Prayer, is—

Tim: In both cases, it's the Greek word *thelo*, which means "what you desire," "what you want."

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: Yeah, which echoes back to the language of desire and the tree—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And the snake from Genesis three.

Jon: In the Lord's Prayer, it's, "May your Kingdom come, may your—"

Jon & Tim: "Desire be done."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And so Jesus is praying that part of the prayer.

Tim: Mhm. Exactly.

Jon: He's praying the prayer.

Tim: Yes. Now—so Gareth, what you're asking is, Jesus—

Jon: Was he being tested, or was he just showing—

Tim: It's—

Jon: Us how to be tested?

Tim: Yeah. Exactly. So one thought is: This story is a bookend—because this is right before the moment that he goes to get arrested and his trial and so on—and so it really is kind of the culminating moment of his whole journey that began with his baptism and his wilderness sojourning.

Jon: And that test.

Tim: Mhm. And I think Matthew's connecting back—it's only Matthew that tells us that Jesus went back and forth three times to pray this prayer.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: He goes back a second time when—

Jon: Disciples are sleepy, yeah.

Tim: He goes back a second time, and then it's the same prayer. And then Matthew tells us he went back a third time, which echoes the three wilderness tests. And remember, the three wilderness tests were all about Jesus preserving his life. "Provide bread for yourself. Throw yourself down." In that case, it would be "risk your life, to force your Father to save your life." And then, in the third case, it's, you know, "I'm going to give you power—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "Over all the kingdoms." So it's all about Jesus securing on his own timeline and by his own strategy—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: All the stuff the Father wants to give him, three times over. And now, here's Jesus in the opposite of the wilderness, the garden, facing another three-fold test. Oh, he also says to the disciples when he goes back, "Watch and pray so that you don't fall into the test—"or "fall into temptation."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Which is also from the Lord's Prayer.

[Laughter]

Tim: And also, the wilderness story of Jesus began with saying, “The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness in order to be tested.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So the question is: Why would Jesus need to be tested?

Jon: Right.

Tim: And the gospel authors just give us the narration of it. I think what’s important is to say when Jesus says, “Not my desire, but your desire, Father—”when he’s talking about my desire, we’ve only ever seen Jesus be completely in union and one with the Father and act according—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: To the Father’s desire. So I mean—Jesus—he’s going to his death and he knows it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But what he also talks about when he goes back to the disciples and they’re asleep—he says, “Watch and pray, you don’t fall into the test. The spirit might be willing, but the flesh is weak.” It’s kind of a famous saying to Jesus. So this is a moment where Jesus is bending the desires of his flesh into union with the desire of the Father. And so in that sense, he’s unifying his human will—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: With the divine will that he shares with his Father.

Jon: Right. And to the degree that he experienced that was his test.

Tim: Totally. Yeah. You know, there’s a moment when whoever wrote the letter to the Hebrews—

Jon: Yeah, I was thinking about that.

Tim: Reflects back. It’s a cool hyperlink—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In the New Testament letters back to the gospels. Uhm—

Jon: Yeah, because for that author, there’s something for us in that he can empathize with us. Is that right?

Tim: Yes. Yeah. In—in two places. One is in chapter two of the letter to the Hebrews where he says, “Since the children—”or, I’m going to—the children are human beings—

“Since humans have flesh and blood, he, that is, the Son of God, shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of the one who holds the power of death, namely, the slanderer, the devil, so he could liberate into freedom all of those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death.” So the first thing he wants to say is: How did God save people who are dying because they keep choosing their own death through their folly?

Jon: Someone’s tangled up in death.

Tim: Yeah. So God doesn’t just, as it were, from the outside, just scoop them out—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Of danger. God actually joins humans in their mortality and dying.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He shares in their humanity. That’s a really big theme in the letter to the Hebrews. So when—earlier in chapter two, then he kind of backs up and—and he puts it this way. He says, “In order to bring many human sons and daughters into a state of glory—” which is his word for the resurrection—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Like, a glorified human—“it was appropriate that God, for whom and through whom everything exists—

[Laughter]

Tim: “It was appropriate that God, who’s the creator of all things, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect—”b—it’s the word *teleios*, complete—“through what he suffered.” So it was actually by the Father sending the divine Son so that the Son, who’s one with the Father, would suffer the same thing that they’re suffer but go through it and be completely, like, unified with the Father. That’s called perfecting or completing the human being.

Jon: I don’t understand the phrase “Make the pioneer of their salvation.”

Tim: Yeah. So it’s the Father and the Son working in partnership.

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: The Son of God doesn’t need to be perfected.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Like, he's cool.

[Laughter]

Tim: But humans really do need to—we're in a bad way down here. And we're in a bad way because of our disordered desires, right? That's the diagnosis of Genesis three. So what if the complete Son of God became one with incomplete, mortal, dying, suffering humans, and then actually completed humanity—perfected that humanity? I think what the author of Hebrews—when he looks at Jesus in Gethsemane, he sees the Son of God having become human, actually finally being the first real human being—

Jon: Right.

Tim: Who's willing to live in union with—with God. And if we're wondering how this links to the garden—or: Does the author of Hebrews really have the garden on the brain? In chapter five, he really links to it most directly. He's talking about the divine Son in chapter five, verse seven, and he says, "In the days of his flesh—"

Jon: When he was cruising around—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Galilee.

Tim: So "Once—once God had become one with human flesh in the person of the Son, he—"that is, the Son—"offered up prayers and requests with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death. And he was heard because of his piety—"or "his devotion to God." So this is clearly a reference to his prayer in the garden. And he sees that in that moment—Gareth, it's interesting—the author of Hebrews doesn't see Jesus being separated from God in the garden. He actually sees this as a moment of Jesus expressing his devotion to God, and being heard, because he says, "The—"that "The Father heard him—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "Because of his piety." So it's a moment I think of intimate union between the Father and the Son, but it's because the Son was going into death—which I don't know what could be more opposite of death than the infinite, eternal, life-giving—



[Laughter]

Tim: Son of God. Like, the point is that God is embracing the thing that's the most opposite of God, which is death. I—there is a great mystery here, but the point is, Gareth, that the Gethsemane story, the testing, is echoing the wilderness. It's echoing Adam and Eve in the garden. And it's—

Jon: It's a way for Jesus to really experience: What does it mean to be human—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And to have to bend your flesh—

Tim: Yeah, into union.

Jon: And the desire of your flesh into union with God? And it's interesting that the author here says, "As he was crying, praying to the one who was able to save him from death, he was heard." Because in the garden story, it almost feels like Jesus is saying, "Can I not—can you take this from me?"

Tim: Oh, sure. Yeah.

Jon And—and—

Tim: Uh-huh.

Jon: He had to drink the cup.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: He had to go through death. But it's interesting that here he said he was saved from death. So the way he was saved from death was to go—

Tim: By going through death—

Jon: Through death.

Tim: That is going through the sword and the fire.

Jon: Going through the sword and the fire.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: 100%.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And it was—according to Hebrews 5:7, it was his flesh. Uh—it was the divine Son, but in a way, it was like it was his flesh that was saying—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “I don’t want to go through this.” This—I think—this is—we’re so hyperlinking, now, but—this is what the Apostle Paul is trying to name, in his letter to the Romans, in chapters seven and eight—

Jon: Oh, right.

Tim: Where he says, like, “In my truest self, I—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Want to do what God commands.”

Jon: Right. “But my flesh—”

Tim: So when God says, “Do not covet—”

[Laughter]

Tim: “Do not desire—”

Jon: Oh.

[Laughter]

Tim: And he says, “What does my flesh end up doing?”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Desiring all this stuff that’s going to kill me.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that’s why he says, “Wretched human that I am, who will save me from this dying body?”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Uhm—yeah man, that story in the garden is worth a lifetime of prayer and pondering because it's the moment when—the truest version of what a human is meant to become is what's happening, there. And it's when God becomes human to be that for us. It's so remarkable.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So that I can meditate on that story and be like, "That's who I can be today."

Jon: "I can do that."

Tim: Yeah. I am capable of it. It's going to be hard because I'm in a version of myself and my body that has all this disordered stuff going on, but it can be bent into union with God's will. Jesus did it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And because he did it, because he can hang in the wilderness—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: S—

Jon: If I'm with him—

Tim: If I'm with him—

Jon: I can hang, too.

Tim: I can hang, too.

Jon: If I'm with him, I can bend my will, my desire. Or really, is it me bending it at that point, or is it him bending it for me?

Tim: That's a great question. Yeah. Paul just said it both ways to the Philippians—

[Laughter]

Tim: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling—"

Jon: Yeah, bend it.

Tim: "Because God is the one at work—"

[Laughter]

Tim: "In you—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "Both in your doing and in your desiring."

Jon: Oh, yeah?

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah. That's what he—

Jon: Is that what he says?

[Laughter]

Tim: That's what he says.

Jon: Oh, wow.

Tim: And so you're like, "Is it me, or is it God?" And—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Paul's answer is "Absolutely, 100%. How could it ever not be both?" Yeah.

Jon: Yeah. But it can't be you on your own.

Tim: No. Yeah, you on your own is just an illusion. That's called not existing.

[Laughter]

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So this has been a very rambling meditation on your question, Gareth, but it's a wonderful question. I'm so glad you asked it and brought that up.

Jon: Yeah. And we're out of time.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And there was many more questions, but—

Tim: Always.

Jon: That's a great place to end. So thank you, everyone, for your thoughtful questions and for engaging with this topic and then reading through the Bible with us in such a—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Meaningful way.

Tim: So cool. Yeah. We love—uh—knowing—especially these Q and R episodes, hearing from y'all—it's really just a fun reminder that as we sit in this room by ourselves talking into microphones that we actually are participating in a big Bible reading community. We're learning together as—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We go.

Jon: Yeah. Okay. Well, why—why are we doing this whole thing—

[Laughter]

Jon: That we call BibleProject?

Tim: That's a great question. We are trying to help people experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. That's what BibleProject is, a nonprofit media studio making all kinds of stuff to help people have that experience.

Jon: Yeah. And we are able to make everything not because it is free to make, but it's all been paid for—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: By generous people, which is so wonderful. And we're thankful for everyone who has participated in making it with us.

Tim: Mhm. This podcast is produced by an amazing group of human beings. Check out the show notes to see some of those names of those images of God. Thanks again for listening, and we will see you in the next episode. We're going to start a new series on all of the key words associated with Advent, leading up to Christmas. It's going to be fun.