
Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 412

Paul's Use of the Old Testament Series: "Messiah"

February 13, 2022

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Episode Summary

Many Bible students would be shocked by the fact that many scholars, including a number in evangelical ranks, believe the New Testament portrayal of Jesus as Messiah is basically foreign, or goes creatively beyond, what the Old Testament says about Messiah (Hebrew: *mashiach*). In this episode, Dr. Heiser and Dr. Matt Halsted chat about the problem of building a messianic profile on just the word *mashiach*. Though problematic, this strategy is at the heart of the notion that the Old Testament messiah-talk does not align with the New Testament Jesus.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 412: Paul's Use of the Old Testament Series: "Messiah" with Matt Halsted. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What's going on?

MSH: Well, no changes, really. Just keeping up with what I need to be doing health-wise and staying busy, not just on the podcast, but working on other projects.

TS: Alright, Mike, well, I'm looking forward to getting into the "Paul's Use of the Old Testament" series here with Matt. The Introduction episode last week was a great one. I think today we're going to be talking about the messiah. So I'm interested to hear what y'all have to say.

MSH: Yeah, I think people will be surprised at the skepticism, even within the evangelical community, about how to approach the Old Testament when it comes to messiah. So it's important that people be aware of that. And it's more important to be able to think better about it.

MSH: Well, we're back with Matt Halsted. And just in case, Matt, there are going to be those in our audience who did not listen to the previous episode, I'm going

to ask you again (I won't ask you this every time) to introduce yourself briefly and your areas of expertise as we continue in our series about how we should be thinking about the Old Testament in the New Testament, specifically as it pertains to messianic thought and who Jesus was. So why don't you just introduce yourself again to our audience?

MLH: Yeah, thanks again for having me on, Mike. My name is Matt Halsted. And I am a professor at Eternity Bible College and a teacher at the Academy of Classical Christian Studies in Oklahoma City. And I did a bachelor's degree in Philosophy. Went on to do a PhD at London School of Theology. And my focus on my PhD was hermeneutics—specifically I wanted to investigate Paul's hermeneutic approach to the Old Testament. And I picked the book of Romans (a noncontroversial book such as Romans). [laughter] And I went through it...

MSH: A hornets' nest.

MLH: It really is. But it's so beautiful, though. It's so much fun. [laughs] And of course I solved that problem. If everybody just agrees with me, then we're good. [laughter] Originally, my research focused on... Gosh, this has been 10-11 years ago. More than that maybe. But my focus in my master's work was on "righteousness" language in Romans and "glory" language in Romans. And what I discovered is Paul's concepts of righteousness, for example, were rooted in his Old Testament citations or quotations from the Old Testament. And so, as I began to journey back into the Old Testament to look those up, I began to notice that Paul is doing some very interesting things with the Old Testament. And right then I just knew that I wanted to study that. So I transferred my master's degree work into first year of PhD, and I finished my PhD and finished my dissertation. I didn't mention this in the last episode, but that dissertation I revised and am publishing it. It should be out in a few months, I guess.

MSH: Who's publishing it?

MLH: Pickwick is publishing it under the title *Paul and the Meaning of Scripture*.

MSH: Then it'll probably be affordable.

MLH: Yeah! I hope so. Yeah. [laughter] That's right.

MSH: What a novel thing that is!

MLH: Yeah. I don't really care if people read it. I just want them to buy it, right? [laughter] I got into biblical studies for the money. [laughs]

MSH: Yeah. Yep.

MLH: That's a joke. [laughs]

MSH: Really. Well, that's good that they picked it up. It'll be published. So I think as we work our way through this series, you're probably going to get some, when it comes out. People can look it up on Amazon. What's the title, just so that people listening later can go look it up?

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MLH: The title is *Paul and the Meaning of Scripture*. Subtitle is *A Philosophical Hermeneutic Approach to Paul's Use of Scripture in Romans*, or... I can't even remember the subtitle. It's something like that. But *Paul and the Meaning of Scripture*. [laughs]

MSH: Yeah, there you go. That's good. Well, the last time we got together and talked, we wanted to introduce in broad strokes the kinds of things that we're going to be talking about—when Paul uses Scripture, or other New Testament writers as well. I mean, we don't necessarily want to exclude them. But since your work was in Paul, that's where a lot of our discussion is going to fall—how Paul uses the Old Testament. And we talked about some of the misperceptions that lead to some flawed thinking about how Paul was dismissive of the Old Testament, or Paul is playing fast and loose with it. "He's off there doing his own interpretive thing and no Jew at Paul's time would have agreed with Paul. Paul's blazing his own trails. He's alone out there in the interpretive universe." Again, these are all flawed assumptions. We talked about how Paul is in a matrix of ideas, and a lot of the ideas that Paul has are going to be shared. Some of them will be different, especially since Paul is viewing things post-resurrection. He's viewing things after the work of Christ on the cross and the resurrection. So that, naturally, going to influence the way he thinks.

And we spent a good deal of time (I thought time well spent) going through some of the issues that you might just encounter as you're reading through Paul's letters. And when he cites the Old Testament, he does some creative things. And we talked about how to think about those things. And what we're really asking people to do is we're asking people to lay down their own assumptions, assumptions like, "Well, all Jews thought the same way about the Old Testament, both then and now." As though, if you walk down the street and you ran into a local rabbi, what he said about messiah or some other passage in the Old Testament is going to be just what they were thinking way back when. Again, that's a deeply flawed assumption. We know this from the Dead Sea Scrolls, that there was a *lot* of discussion about *lots* of places and concepts (messiah being one of them) in the Old Testament that had a lot of interpretive variety. And Paul is going to be somewhere in that mix. But the way he cites the Old Testament is going to reflect his belief in Jesus as the messiah. And so when we were talking about that last time, I said, "This is going to be one of the points of pushback, where you're going to have people (even evangelicals) who will say or wonder if we can let Paul go with that. Because they're going to say or wonder thoughts

like, “Well, if we didn’t have Paul—if we didn’t have the New Testament—and we just read the Old Testament, and we read what the Old Testament said about messiah, we would never come out with Jesus. We would never come out with a figure that looks like Jesus or said what Jesus would say or do what Jesus did.” That there’s this fundamental disconnection between the Old Testament description of messiah and what we actually get in the Gospels and in the letters of Paul and other New Testament writers.

Now I want to start this off... To convince my audience, more or less, that I’m not making this tension up, I have in front of me a quotation. This is from John Sailhamer, writing an article entitled “Messiah and the Hebrew Bible.” And he writes this:

In a recent book review for *JETS* [MSH: *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*], Walt Kaiser has made a strong plea for the importance of the question of the Messiah and the Hebrew Bible. The question, says Kaiser, “could be a defining moment for evangelical scholarship and ultimately for the Church’s view of the way we regard Scripture.” According to Kaiser, the question ultimately comes down to whether the NT interpretation of an OT text is, in fact, the meaning intended by the OT author. Kaiser states, “. . . if it is not in the OT text, who cares about how ingenious later writers are in their ability to reload the OT text with truths that it never claimed or revealed in the first place? The issue is more than hermeneutics,” says Kaiser. The issue is that of “the authority and content of revelation itself!”

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Now Sailhamer is bringing this up because there’s been a longstanding debate about what the Old Testament text meant to its own writers, originally. And then taking that question and moving it over to, “Well, look at what Paul does when he quotes it. Does he assign new meanings to it—meanings that would violate the original meaning?” And this is a whole area of disagreement and discussion that is deeply embedded, not only within evangelical scholarship, but just scholarship generally, as you can imagine.

So the question comes down to, “If we didn’t have the New Testament, what would we see when it comes to messiah?” So we want to talk about this today. And I’m going to sort of play my hand here, for the audience. And some of you may detect what the flaw is here right away, but I’m going to do it anyway. And that is, if we restrict our discussion to the word *mashiah* in the Old Testament... It occurs 39 times—*mashiah* (anointed one). It comes from the verb *mashah* (to anoint or smear), which occurs 69 times in the Old Testament. If we restrict our discussion to just that term, would our portrait of the *mashiah* (messiah) be markedly different from—really almost in violation of—what we get in the New Testament? Now Matt, I’m quite sure you have thoughts on this. And now that we’ve put out that trajectory there, we want to go through what the Old

Testament says about *mashiah*, but I want to give you a chance to chime in here and talk about the issue as you see it.

MLH: Yeah. You know, the first thought that comes to mind with this idea of *mashiah* is that, be careful with word studies, right? [MSH laughs] And what I mean by that... You know...

MSH: Yes.

MLH: Let me just say this. It's funny... A couple days ago I guess it was, I was telling some of my students that... Because we were talking about some stuff in Isaiah, and then somehow we got on messiah stuff. And I said, "Okay, let's talk about messiah. If you go back in the Old Testament and look up every instance of *mashiah*, and you're expecting to find something that says 'Jesus,' you're going to be very disappointed." [laughs] Right? Because you're going to go back in those texts and you're going to read about... You go find 'messiah,' and then you're going to see something about Cyrus. You know? You're going to see something about maybe a Syrian king or something, that gets anointed." And so when it comes to word studies, it's very important that we don't think so narrowly. And so it's good for the audience to know that this concept of messiah (this concept of "anointed one" or just the act of anointing) is just one piece of the larger puzzle or the larger picture or image. And we have to... We need more data than just that word, or a word study of *mashiah*. Right? But nonetheless, it's important data. And I think once we get it all in, we do get a picture—an image—of somebody who looks a lot like Jesus ended up looking like. But you have to have *all* the data. You need the *mashiah* data. You need "son of man" data. You need all this other language that's all throughout the Bible. And so I'm hesitant to restrict it just down to "messiah" language. Right?

MSH: Yeah, well, obviously I would be too, which is why I led with that.

MLH: Right.

MSH: But look at the way you teach hermeneutics and Bible study methods. I mean, this is so easy to fall into, because... I mean, I'll just be personal here. I can remember when, as a teenager, I had read through the Bible once. And I started over reading it again. But the thought immediately occurred to me, "Well, what happens after I read through it again? What's the next step? Do I just keep reading this thing? How do people come to understand what they're reading?" And I was introduced by a friend to *Strong's Concordance*. This was sort of the natural next step after you've read through the Bible at least once. Now you need to know what a concordance is so that you can study *words*. [MLH laughs] You can do word studies. And so I bought a *Strong's Concordance*. At the time it was \$13. That might tell you how long ago it was. But it was keyed to the King James Version, which was the version I had. And I discovered the wonder of *Strong's*

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Concordance, and his little dictionary in the... You can't even really call it a dictionary, but his list of English equivalents in the back. And looking up a word and knowing all of the places where the word occurs, and all of the places that the King James translates it in different ways, and sort of making a collection out of that. You know? Like, "Okay, this word *mashiah* that we're wondering about, the King James is going to translate that in different ways." And I could collect the mass of data. I could find every one of those places with my concordance. For *mashiah*, Strong's gave it a number. All I had to do was look at the number in the back of his book to find the list of where they all occurred. And it was like... The way this was presented to me was this was like magic. [MLH laughs] That now that you know wherever this word is used and how your translation handles it, somehow or another, that's going to instruct you into what the text means in all of those verses.

MLH: Mm hmm.

MSH: I mean, this is how word studies were presented to me. And nowadays we can go well beyond Strong's tools (you know, we have Bible software, for instance), where we can get to an amazing amount of data with lightning speed. But it's still the same kind of assumption. Just because I know where a word occurs and how many times it occurs and how my English translation translates that word, that somehow meaning is unlocked to me. You know?

MLH: Yeah.

MSH: That's really overstating the case. [laughter]

MLH: I get you, though. I remember my first class in taking Greek. It was actually my second class ever in seminary. And it was taking Greek. And you know, there's a point in the life of a seminary [student where things] become very dangerous. And it's the first three weeks of language studies, right? [laughter] Because you think, "Oh, I've unlocked everything!" And you're critiquing sermons and you're critiquing these... You know? And you think because you've got that key, you can unlock *everything*. But actually, what ends up happening and as you mature in your [laughs] studies of the languages, you find out, "Oh wait. I don't know if this was a key that opens up answers or if it's a key that opens up questions." Right? Because just as we'll talk about the *mashiah* idea—the messiah idea—it occurs in lots of different contexts. And if you think that the word just simply means "end time eschatological figure" or whatever, you might be slightly disappointed in some of the texts that we read. Right? And yet I think that even those texts say something about constructing this image of who we actually have in Jesus. So I think that's important to keep in mind, too. But yeah, we need to know that there are semantic ranges to words. [laughs] And that meaning comes from context. And that's of big importance.

MSH: Right. And one subject is not possibly covered by one term.

MLH: Oh, that's so good. That's a very important point, yeah.

MSH: You know? We have to come to grips with that. When we talk about messiah, my audience is used to me talking in terms of the messianic mosaic, or a profile that I believe was intentionally fragmented. That this is part of the greater wisdom of God to not so transparently telegraph what the salvation plan was involving the death of the messiah and the resurrection.

MLH: Mm hmm.

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MSH: But you build out this profile—this mosaic—not just with one word. You build it out with lots of different words and concepts and events and incidences in the Old Testament that they all contribute something to the profile or the mosaic. The word messiah itself (*mashiah*) is just one element of that. But this is where a lot of scholars live. They will insist on focusing on the word *mashiah* to get their theology of messiah. And then once they produce kind of an empty basket [laughs], you know, when it comes to, "This doesn't really look a whole lot like Jesus, at least that I can see on the surface," then the scholar thinks that he has his student (or his victim) right where he wants him. "See there, if you just had the Old Testament, you'd never come out with anything looking like Jesus." Well, the student doesn't know that the scholar has just cheated. The scholar has just taken one element—this one word—and focused on it to the exclusion of lots of other things to think about and to see in the Old Testament. And if this sounds foreign to my audience, let's just get into it. I mean, if you actually look up... As I said, it occurs 39 times, the noun anyway (*mashiah*), in the Old Testament. So you're going to have it used of kings, very obviously. What is it about those kings that... I'll let you chime in here. I mean, I don't want to monopolize this. But what is it about the king being anointed that would be both affirming to our profile of what Jesus would eventually look like and would be deflating? Let's put it that way.

MLH: Well, that's good. Yeah, I think that what would affirm what Jesus would look like in some of these instances, say, with either David or Solomon, these historical kings who are called "messiah." Or even take Cyrus in Isaiah, who is not Jewish. He's called "messiah." And, okay, how do those point to Christ? And really, I think there are some nuggets of gold there that we can glean, as in the case of Cyrus. You know, God had a plan to bring Israel home, to end exile. Right? And to return to the Promised Land.

MSH: Mm hmm. Through the *mashiah*.

MLH: Through a *mashiah*. Yeah! And true, if the average person living in that time heard, "Hey, Cyrus, God's anointed, has allowed this to happen. This is so good for the nation..."

MSH: Yeah, "We get to go home."

MLH: "We get to go home." But those same people wouldn't say, "Oh, well, that's going to point to Jesus one day." You know? [laughs] That's not how they would've interpreted that. Right?

MSH: And they couldn't even say that it points to David.

MLH: Right. That has to develop, too. That's another part of the element, as thought...

MSH: Right. Because he's a Persian king.

MLH: Oh, yeah! I see what you're saying. Yeah, absolutely! Yeah. He's not Jewish at all. He's not within the dynasty that God had promised. So that's just one element. But again, it tells a story, though, right? Even Cyrus is telling a story, whether he knows it or not, that God has a plan. He's going to use an agent to bring about that plan. The same with David or Solomon and some of the other priests are... Some priests are even called "the anointed priests" and so forth in Leviticus.

MSH: Mm hmm. And some prophets are called "anointed." Yep.

MLH: Oh, yep, that's right. And all of those pieces can (again, as I said earlier at the beginning) help construct this image such that once we get all the data in, it's consistent with what we actually have in Jesus. But there are elements, though, that when you look at these historical figures, that would be inconsistent with what we have in Jesus. I mean, let's just take the best... the hero of the Old Testament, I guess you could say (I mean, there are several we could say)... But just take David—that David is given this title. And David's a pretty good guy. I mean, we like David. We teach our kids about David in Sunday school. But there are some things in David's life that are not so good, right? [laughs] And even his son, Solomon, there are great things that he accomplished and yet there are some things that he's not so good. So if these people, these wonderful heroes of Judaism, of our tradition even, are called "messiah" and they let us down and they don't quite get to where we thought they would, it leaves us longing for another. And "Cyrus lets us go home, but are we really free when we get home?"

MSH: See, and that's the point of a lot of scholars who will be critical of Paul and Christianity, to be blunt about it. They'll say, "Look, *mashiah* is used of historic kings. As you read through the Old Testament, there's going to be kings in the

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Davidic dynasty that are said to be anointed (*mashiah*). You're going to have it of Saul. You're going to have it of David. You're going to have it of Solomon. You're going to get other Davidic descendants (Zedekiah) where this term is used of them. But they're all historic figures of the past. And they're all going to be historic figures that are not ideal. And so that's what you get as your messiah just using the Old Testament. You don't get passages (or so they'll say) that look for a future grand deliverer, much less divine (having a divine nature as well as a human dynasty). They're going to point to the fact that the word overwhelmingly gets used of a king that is part of the Old Testament story. And his story ends! They're just kings. They're just royal figures (or prophets or priests) that are long dead and gone. There's nothing about this grand coming divine messiah who's going to die for the sins of the nation, who's going to rise again. "This picture," they will say, "is not present when we look at the term *mashiah*." And on one hand, that's true. But on the other hand, well, there's a lot more that could be said.

MLH: Yeah. And like we've said earlier, if you're only content with dealing but with part of the data and you're not willing to look at the other items that need to be factored into the equation, you're going to come to the conclusion that these historical figures have nothing else to do with Paul's later conception of Jesus as messiah. They're just... He's doing his own new thing, right? And I would just simply pushback and say two things: 1) You're only dealing with part of the data. There are other places in the Old Testament, other concepts and words and ideas that we need to deal with to get the bigger picture. So if you just give me part of the pie and not the other pieces, yeah, we're just going to have a part of the pie at the end of the day, but there are other pieces out there we need to deal with—other concepts other than just messiah. But... 2) The second thing I would say in terms of pushback to those scholars who would suggest these sorts of things is, "Look. Because you are limiting the data to just this one word and you're effectively doing just a glorified word study [laughs], you have discounted the fundamental belief in ancient Judaism: that God's writing a story, and the story is progressing." And these people... As you said in one of our conversations one time, we can approach history as an archeological dig, where it's just dead stuff of the past that has no bearing on the present or the future, and I would say...

MSH: "There's no ongoing story being told here, in this pit that I'm digging."

MLH: And that's an un-Jewish way of thinking.

MSH: Yes.

MLH: Because God is always active in history. He's always moving. And he is using these figures—these historical figures who are from time to time called "messiah"—to paint part of the story. Yet not all the story, but part of the story.

And we need to keep progressing along the Old Testament story. And then, of course, as we get into some Second Temple Judaism stuff, some of these things begin to become clear. And I think actually what we see... And I know we'll go here in future episodes, but what we see is there's other concepts besides just "messiah" (*mashiah*) or the verbal idea (*mashah*). There are other messiahs. Daniel has something to say, right? The book of Daniel.

MSH: Yes he does.

MLH: And we need to be talking about him. And there's even "son of God" language. And there's...

MSH: There's Melchizedek language.

MLH: Oh goodness, yes. Absolutely. Of course, David—son of David—language. We talked about 2 Samuel 7 in the last episode that we did. And so once you get all the data, then you can start putting the pieces together. And then that's where the picture begins to emerge. But yeah. If you deal with just part of the data, you're not going to get a complete picture.

MSH: Yeah. I'm going to just read a little quote from Father Fitzmyer. His book, *The One Who Is To Come*, which is... You know, I'm going to disagree with... I mean, Fitzmyer was a good Catholic, so he's not going to be an anti-Christian. But yeah, I think he takes too hard of a line here, at least that's the feeling I get. But he writes:

Where *mashiah* is used of David or of his descendants, [MH: those instances] celebrate the king's historic accession to the throne. The title "Anointed One" is given thus to a reigning king.

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And that's an important idea. Because what he's trying to say is that the term *mashiah* in the Old Testament is used explicitly of a currently (within the story) "reigning king," not a future coming divine man who would atone for sin. And okay, this is where we see the term, mostly. But like you said, Daniel's going to have something to say about this. And it's amazing to me how Daniel 9 gets excluded [laughs] from the messiah discussion.

MLH: Yeah. Mm hmm.

MSH: But there's also more to it. It's not just about a single word. It's about other words. You know, the servant, the glory, Melchizedek—all that. Let's just go back to the word study thing. And I'm going to accuse scholars now of being a little careless in their word study. But is it a coincidence, really, that you have *mashiah* used of kings, prophets, and priests? Is that a coincidence? Prophet, priest, and king. Or might that be telling us—might that be building out—something in what

we would call the messianic profile—that whoever this future figure is needs to be a prophet, a priest, and a king?

MLH: Right.

MSH: You know? Is that all coincidental? And a lot of these sources, a lot of these articles and scholars that you'll read, never even make a statement like that. And I think it's an important statement to make. Is this coincidental? Or as you brought up, the Old Testament notion is that the story is ongoing. It doesn't stop anywhere. Even at the end of the exile, when "we're celebrating Cyrus, and he lets us go home," the people who are acquainted with the Hebrew Bible know that the real description of the restoration from exile is that all the 12 tribes are back together again in the land. And that ain't happening.

MLH: Right.

MSH: That's not happening.

MLH: Right. There was an old saying about a pastor, that he was really good about picking apart the Bible, but he had no idea how to put it back together. [laughter] And that's always stuck with me, because anytime we do these little word studies, or I see people do word studies, I think, "Okay, yeah, that's great. Great data. You're doing well. You're mining the field. But what are you going to do when you're done? What are you going to do with it?" And I think one piece here that we have to factor in is that when we do our word study, when we get into the text... And I hope I'm not coming across as anti-word study. Let's do word studies. Anything to get us into the text, let's do it, right?

MSH: Yeah. But they have limitations. There are things they contribute to well, and they have limitations.

MLH: Right. That's all that I'm saying. Exactly. And one thing we notice, though, when we do this word study on messiah (*mashiah*)... And it's so simple. We just may miss it. But anytime that word (the noun or even the verbal forms) is used, it's always in the service of promoting the story of Israel. Right? So even if Cyrus is labeled "messiah," it's in service... It's just a piece of the greater story that's being told of Israel's story.

MSH: Mm hmm.

MLH: And I don't think that we can ever... Let me back up. That right there is super important—that we see that messiah is always used in service of the story that God's writing of his people Israel. So if that's the case, if we want a proper understanding of messiah language, we have to run back to the story. "Okay, well, what's the story about?" And you can't talk about any of these sorts of

things—and you can't even get to where Paul and the New Testament's going—without understanding why Israel is Israel in the first place. Why did God call Israel in the first place? It's always to save the world, essentially. Right? Genesis 11-12. The world's gone crazy. Abraham is called to be the rescue plan for the world. (This is N. T. Wright stuff.) And that *is* the story. That's the history of Israel. And messiah... When a messiah pops up here in the text or in there in the text, or over here or over there, it's always in service of promoting *that* story—of rescuing the world through Israel as God promised Abraham. And I think that's something that we need to factor in, too. It gives a little bit of cushion, I think, to our study of messiah.

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MSH: You know, it makes me, again... And I'm hoping the audience doesn't conclude that I'm a hermeneutics basher, because I'm not. I'm just arguing for better hermeneutics, okay? But look at how we're taught hermeneutics. So I'm reading along in the books of Samuel or Kings or whatever, and I run across a king who's referred to as *mashiah*—the anointed king. He's in the line of David. Blah blah blah blah blah. Well, we're taught to isolate that in a pericope—in a paragraph, in a passage. But we never really ask the question, "Well, ultimately, is what I'm reading here only about this king? Is it only about this one guy?" What about the institution of kingship and how kingship (the king being the son of God—we'll throw in that kind of language) mirrors the greater story of Israel? "Israel was my son. Let my son go out in the desert, that he may worship me," Moses says to Pharaoh. "This is what the Lord wants. He wants his son—the nation—to go out into the desert to worship him." So the story's not about just this one guy. Because kingship, ultimately, is not about just one individual or even one family. It's about the story of God's son, who would be the representation—who would be the ruler representative—to the whole world. Again, N. T. Wright language. Israel is God's escape plan—God's salvation plan—for the whole world. The story's not ultimately just about one individual that happens to get this title. The story's so much bigger than that. But we're not taught to think big. We're not taught to think like storytellers in our hermeneutics classes. We're taught to think like surgeons.

MLH: Hmm. That's good.

MSH: You know? Where we just fixate on one little bit of the text and somehow assume that the meaning of the text is encapsulated in this one little portion or this one little term. And that is so overtly narrow as to mislead.

MLH: Right. And I think once we have in our mind what you've just described, then we can begin to make sense of those texts later in the Old Testament that will take this "David" language and pair it up with other language of, like, servant language in some of these same passages.

MSH: Mm hmm.

MLH: So if David is messiah, if he's anointed messiah (which there's an instance in the text where he is called messiah), and if David is also called "son"—God's son ("I will be to him a father, and he will be to me a son"), and if Israel is God's son (Exodus 4:23 "Let my son go"), then what we begin to see is, "Oh my goodness. It was never really about historical David. Yeah, he's important. Very important. But these things are pointing to another reality because God's story is progressing." And so what we end up finding, actually, in the Old Testament is that messiah language is paired with David language. And David language is paired with sonship language and kingship language and servant language.

MSH: And servant language, yeah.

MLH: And what we really...

MSH: And branch language. You know, we had Rusty Osborne on probably two years ago to talk about his work on trees and kings—all this branch, tree terminology.

MLH: Yeah.

MSH: That's another big part of it.

MLH: Yeah, kingship/branch language is brought together. And you have kingship language merging with son of man language in Daniel—that concept. And pretty soon what we discover... At the end of the day, as the sun is setting, we discover, "My goodness, all of these different concepts have merged into one plot. They have merged over time and through years of thinking through and writing about these things in the Old Testament. They've merged into one plot." And it's fascinating once we've traced all that. And that goes back to the original point, that if you just focus on messiah language, you won't get there. You have to connect the dots. Again, we may be good at picking the Bible apart, but can we put it back together. And that putting back together is what preps us for, I think, the New Testament.

40:00

MSH: Yeah, I mean, look at the range of things there. You've got messiah (*mashiah*). You've got royal king language. You've got tree and branch language. We've got servant language. We've got son language. All of these things are used corporately of Israel. But even that, what's that story about? Where does tree language... What's the point of that? Well, it goes back to these visions of Eden and what God originally wanted. And sonship does the same thing because of human creation and the parallels between Adam and Israel and David and any number of other biblical figures. I mean, the matrix of ideas here is so wide that *mashiah* is just one little entry point—one little cog in that machine. And to fixate on that and do your theology on the basis of that alone is just deeply flawed. That's about the nicest thing I can say about it. It's just deeply flawed. So how do

you think, just as we veer toward wrapping up this episode... Can you give us an instance or two, maybe just a thought if you don't have anything specific in mind, of how Paul tracks on putting the story parts together as opposed to isolating them?

MLH: Yeah, that's a great question. So Paul talks and uses the language of messiah all the time. It's not *mashiah*. Right? It's *Christos*.

MSH: *Christos*, yep.

MLH: It's a very important word for Paul. And it's always and obviously in reference to Jesus of Nazareth. And *Christos* means "anointed one," from *chrío*, meaning to anoint. And Jesus Christ is literally Jesus the Messiah. That's how we should think about it, I think.

MSH: As a title.

MLH: Yeah, as a title. Yeah. It's not his name. [laughs]

MSH: Even a name... In some instances, it get close to that. Yeah.

MLH: Yeah, it does take on, like, a nominal or a name sort of idea. It does. But it's not like Jesus' surname, right?

MSH: Right.

MLH: It's not like the family name or anything. I'm just thinking in Romans, I've turned to Romans here. Romans 1, 2, 3. He starts off by saying, "Paul, a servant of *Christou Iesou* (of Messiah Jesus)." So he has the messiah language as the third word that he uses there. And he just two verses down talks about this "son," the son of God, who was born of the seed of David. And so he brings in David language, son of God language, messiah language with *Christos*. And he brings these things together in just the first few verses. Right. And this is very normal for Paul. And so even he is, I think, a very careful and a very well-versed reader of Scripture, such that the language of Scripture is the language of Paul. And we just miss it. So I mean, if someone's reading Romans 1:1, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus," okay stop right there. [laughs] Just start with that: "Christ." This is all the messiah language packed into one person here. And yet going down, son of God language. Okay, that evokes the exodus. That evokes Exodus 4:23, where Israel is called "son of God." It evokes the story of Israel, obviously. And then he brings in David. Like, "Where does David come in here?" If you didn't know anything about this man, David, "Well, who is David?" You know? Well, David's part of the story. And I think the thought that I would really leave with the audience is actually kind of simple, but it's very important, is that you will miss it if you don't think in a storied way.

MSH: Yeah.

45:00

MLH: If your hermeneutics is not storied, then you will not understand the story of God or the *his*-tory of God that he's doing. Because these are... Okay, just take Romans. It's a letter. And that letter has a story. And it's embedded necessarily within a context. And it's part of Paul's story of being an apostle to the Gentiles, and that relationship with, "why is he an apostle to Gentiles?" Well, the story of Israel was always about rescuing the Gentiles, right? That's Genesis 12. "You'll be a blessing to all the nations," says God to Abraham. So all the pieces get together. And I mean, I could preach a dozen sermons on the first few verses of Romans 1. So you've got to... I don't believe in eisegesis (reading into the text, in the negative sense). But I think as Christians, if we want to just cherish the Bible because it's worth cherishing, we will dig into the text. We need to dig into the text and track down the story behind the word. So that's what I would say, is, "Okay, track down the story behind the word "*mashiah*."

MSH: Paul isn't guilty of eisegesis because Paul's giving you several elements of the plotline as opposed to one.

MLH: Right.

MSH: Okay? And you're supposed to be familiar enough with the story to be able to track along with him as to why he's doing that, where he's going with it, what he does with it. Again, we're back to the part about not knowing our Old Testament sufficiently so that we can immediately perceive what Paul is doing.

MLH: Mm hmm.

MSH: He's not reading into anything. He's pulling out of the wider story a number of things that are in the text and weaving them together as they are woven together in storytelling fashion, even in the Old Testament. It's just that it gets funneled to this one individual, Jesus, in Paul's experience.

MLH: Right. That's exactly right. Yeah, wow, there is so much to say about that. Because I tell people all the time, Saul of Tarsus had his life changed when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. So he didn't become a Christian by reading through his Bible and, "Oh, I'm going to become a Christian now." No, it was just a radical supernatural experience that he had that altered his life forever. But he was not a blank slate, right? So he was Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee of Pharisees. And he knew his text. And so that sudden, startling, supernatural vision, Jesus coming into his life on that Damascus road, it did not occur in a vacuum. Paul was immersed in Scripture up until that point. And so that vision that Christ... That epiphany that really happened in that moment actually... I think a way to look at it is a fusing of his Jewish scriptural presuppositions with this startling image of a crucified, resurrected Jesus. And he was able to put those two

together. So I think we can learn a lot from Paul by reading after Paul. And we can learn a lot about the Old Testament by I think just... I encourage people, like, "You can learn about the Old Testament by reading the Old Testament. Do that." But you can also learn about the Old Testament by reading Romans [laughs]—if you do it right. [MSH laughs] And I know that's sort of... My Old Testament scholar friends might say, "Okay, well, let's be careful there. Because we don't want to read the Old Testament in light of Paul's assumptions so much." But I would say, "Well, Paul is a Jew. Paul is reading..."

MSH: Why not? He's a Jew.

MLH: That's my point. Because of certain things that our generation has inherited from, say, Reformation hermeneutics, like with Luther and some other ideas about the Old Testament being all about works and the New Testament being all about faith, and all of a sudden Paul gets kind of thrown into this label of being a radically new thinker. "And so let's just bypass Paul and go straight to the Old Testament. Because he'll mess us up." Right? No, no, no, no, no. Don't think of Paul through those lenses. Think of Paul as the Jew that he was. And I think he can teach us a lot. But we have to be patient. We have to be patient in our reading of Paul. You can't rush it. Because he's an incredibly profound thinker. And he assumes a lot of things that are not in his text explicitly on the surface. So you're going to have to do a lot of homework. But yeah, just to back up, I would just say, be a storied interpreter. Look for the story behind the concept and behind the words. When you study messiah language, it'll go a long way in helping you understand messiah language.

MSH: Yep, I would agree. I think that's a good point for us to end on, too—a storied reader, a storied approach. If you have one takeaway from this episode, that would be your major takeaway, for those in my audience—that you should not be reading Scripture in some sort of effort to isolate the passage you're in from all other passages, and call it interpreting in context. That's not what you're doing. You're killing context. The context is the story. There's more than one context. There are many contexts. Yes, the passage that you're in has an immediate context. We're not denying that. But to take that as the lone context (or even the most important one) is to really cut yourself off from what Scripture as a whole is trying to teach you. So I like the way you put that: be a storied reader. And that ultimately the larger story is the guiding context of being able to think with the writer and his original readers, not only about what's being penned immediately, but sort of its place or its contribution to the story that's ongoing as a whole. And that would make you a much more intelligent and intuitive reader of Scripture, just generally. So I think that would be a tremendous help. So Matt, I want to thank you again for being with us and helping us think through some of these things. And we're grateful that you could take the time.

50:00

MLH: Well, I'm thankful and grateful to be here. It's always fun to chat. And thanks for having me on.

TS: Alright, Mike, a great conversation about the messiah. If this is what we can expect in this series, it's going to be a great series.

MSH: Yeah, I think so too. What we're shooting for here is broad principles of Paul as an interpreter of the Old Testament, and as we read Paul, just to have more of Paul in our head, naturally, but some of these broad principles, like not forgetting the overall story when we study Scripture is really important.

TS: Alright, well, we'll be looking forward to the next installment in the series next week. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.