

Meditating Psalm 2

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[0 : 00] First, I'd like to point out that somewhere along the way, the text got, well, in textual studies we would say corrupted, but I won't use that word.

There is no on in today's title. The title is Meditating Psalm 2. Okay. Not my wrist. Anyway, you can see that somebody might think something had been left out.

Here we go. The topic for this morning, Meditating Psalm 2, right away raises the question of what it means to meditate a psalm.

In this particular case, it means that in the spring of 2016, I decided to memorize Psalm 2.

It had been a long time since I set out to memorize anything. Until I felt like I had a permanent internal recording, which took a while, I worked at the project every day.

[1 : 12] Two of the repeated settings for saying it over to myself have been walking along Kingsway sidewalk and lying in bed at night.

As will come out later, and this was a surprise to me, the psalm itself also has something to say about meditation.

Only after that first year did I offer the topic to Learners Exchange. During the past summer, I delved into some of the commentary on the psalm and on the Book of Psalms.

So this account of some of what Psalms 2 says to me could be called meditation plus. If I'm going to memorize anything from the English Bible, it is going to be from the King James Version.

My primary reason for taking this approach is that the translation tends toward being literal, even to the point of stretching English to accommodate the original languages.

[2 : 17] It seems sensible to cope with unfamiliarities in my mother tongue in order to get closer to what is even more unfamiliar.

There are two other preliminaries that deserve mention. The first has to do with reading, what it means to comprehend a specific piece of text.

A set of words interacts with the experiences and abilities of the person doing the reading. Those results will never be exactly the same, but they converge in a meaning that emerges from a community of conversation.

That is part of what we are doing here this morning. A cornerstone for how I read texts today was laid in my first years of university-level education.

I was trained in two separate traditions of close reading, a method that is most often applied to shorter poems, which is what we have today.

[3 : 29] On the English side, the practice came out of an approach known as new criticism. On the French side, the approach was called explication de text, something less newfangled and far less tied to a scientism and a free-floating aestheticism.

The other preliminary is about the person doing the reading, said person being me. I felt a strong attraction to this psalm.

It resonated with what the Bible has otherwise said to me. In my working years, I had a substantial daily commute of a 40- to 50-minute one-way trip on a single bus.

Early on, I decided that I had to develop a capacity to read on the bus without getting nauseated.

One of the things that I did after I overcame that difficulty was to read the entire Bible start to finish.

That experience brought home to me the centrality of 587 B.C. to the whole span of God's people. The temple destroyed.

[4 : 48] The Jews carried off to exile in Babylon. It really does feel like history comes to an end in the final chapters of 2 Kings.

In my reading of the entire Bible, I would say, historically speaking, that only the life of Jesus is more significant in our big story.

That may be a little bold. Thank you. So, now a word of prayer, and then we will get into Psalm 2. Dear Lord, be with us as we listen with care to the words of Psalm 2 this morning. Help us to understand rightly, to perceive new connections, and to find heart in a world that so often seems hostile to love of you and love of neighbor.

Above all, help us to remain open to the mysteries of these words whose meanings we will never exhaust. Amen. Of the things I will say about Psalm 2, some are certainties, some are probabilities, and some are possibilities.

[6:01] Instinctively, I take what I think is a conservative approach to understanding a text, a set of words. I tend to be very cautious about pushing possibilities toward certainties.

So, we're going to look at Psalm 2 under five headings. Verse 1, the voices, distant reading, intermediate reading, and finally, and probably most significantly, fear and trembling.

Psalm 2, okay, so here's verse 1. Psalm 2 starts off with a question. That is a certainty. According to my count, there are seven other psalms whose very first words ask a question.

Most psalms do not do this at the very outset. In this case, the question is a why question. Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?

What form does the answer to a why question take? Typically, because something. Think about an impatient parent with a child of a certain age.

[7:26] The child asks why. The parent may even stop with because. Situations tend to be complicated. In the moment, authority may need to demand trust without explanation.

I'm not sure a person thinking in Greek rather than Hebrew mode would be fully satisfied with the because that can be found in Psalm 2.

That simple observation may become a topic for our discussion to follow. There are five main grammatical elements in this first double-pronged sentence.

Subject-verb followed by subject-verb-object. Heathen, rage, people, imagine, vain thing. In a way, you could say that this sentence has five nuggets of meaning.

Two agents, two actions, and one object of action. If your eyes are glazing over already, stretch them open again. There will be no more of this sort of parsing.

[8:36] The main purpose of that counting up is to say that four of those five words are not common Bible words. All except heathen occur fewer than 50 times.

People is pretty familiar, but it appears here in a less common poetic form. In seven or eight other Bible texts, heathen and people are found in parallel.

Some of you will already know the Hebrew word for heathen from present-day Jewish usage. Goy. Translate as not Jewish. Let's complicate this now. Make it less us and them. In the Hebrew Bible, both of the words can apply to Israel, although the primary connotation is others who do not recognize God.

In the long history of Israel, of course, this distinction takes on a lot of irony, because so often Israel itself failed to be God's people.

[9:47] Rage, an imagine and vain thing are less common words. In fact, rage is as rare as it gets.

One occurrence only as a verb. Scarce related nouns occur in Psalm 55, verse 14, and in Psalm 64, verse 2, translating respectively in King James as in company and as insurrection.

In both of these other contexts, the atmosphere is extremely negative. The main purpose of this excursion into rage is to point out just one set of echoes that remains invisible even to a devoted reader of the literalistic King James Bible.

Different words in each case in the English. A standard Bible dictionary distills the meaning of the verb translated as rage into this useful phrase, throng tumultuously.

Do you ever say throng tumultuously? I don't. A shorter and more vernacular translation of that phrase might be riot.

[11:15] Why do the heathen riot? Well, we need to get beyond verse 1. A paraphrase of the first verse could be this more colloquial question.

Why is the world such a mess? Well, I've already used up a quarter of the words that fit into available time. Now let's take a look at the whole psalm.

This look will be taken from several angles. In keeping with meditation, there will not be a smooth progression from beginning to end, even though we have started at the beginning.

Now, the voices. Early on in listening... Yes? Would it be possible for you to just read the psalm?

Yes. Well, I was going to have it up on the screen, and I missed a piece of technology.

If you read it to us, we want to be more of a sense of what the psalm says, because people are checking on their phones. Yes. But just to give us a... Okay. Well, as I say, I memorized it, so I probably can...

[12:23] I probably can manage, and maybe Traff, if I get stuck, will help me along.

Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord... The Lord...

Okay. Yeah. The Lord shall have... Them in derision. Them in derision. Yeah. It's kind of...

Yeah. Let me read it. Let me read it. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

[13:39] Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son.

This day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings.

Be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.

Blessed be all they that put their trust in him. Early on, in listening over and over to the entire text, I felt led to ponder on who is saying what.

[14:54] To whom? The more I listened, the stranger it all became. What seems certain to me is that the voices are multiple.

The United Bible Society handbook for translators of the Old Testament says of verse 7, Translators should make certain that the change of speakers is clear.

The shift from the Lord as speaker in verse 6, Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

To the Lord's anointed in verse 7, I will declare the decree, is clear. That said, the continuation here of the first person puts a tremendous burden on a person trying to comprehend the words.

This is a kind of writing your teacher probably would criticize, if you were doing the writing and if this were a secular text. Other boundaries between speakers in this psalm are less clear.

[16:06] I sense five speakers, and here I'm not going to try to nail anything to the wall. Among these speakers, the meanings resonate.

The five are the psalmist, the kings of the earth, the Lord, the anointed of the Lord, and the chanter of the psalm.

This becomes very complicated. Start with this being a portion of God's word, and therefore all of it issuing from God.

In one sense, God says all of this. Next, consider verse 3. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

If you read this psalm in the King James, the immediately preceding italicized word is saying, but it's in italics.

[17:08] By inserting this word that does not appear in the Hebrew, the translators have nailed down that verse and turned it into a quotation of what the kings of the earth and the rulers say.

The translation thus becomes more definite than what is translated. From my point of view, that amounts to human translators having a better idea of what the text should be if in God does.

When did Israel ever hold such sway over the kings and the rulers that they would have felt so constrained by Israel's fetters?

Let me offer two reasons I have problems with this specific attribution to speaker. First of all, a reduction implies a situation where the Lord and his anointed have predominated among the nations in a way that I find nowhere recorded in scripture.

Second of all, I can hear this verse resonating with the laments of Israel carried off to Babylon. I cannot forget what Psalm 137 says about weeping and remembering Zion.

[18:23] A little further along in the psalm, the Lord's anointed recites what? The Lord hath said unto me. There is a sense in which these quoted words have three or more nested speakers.

The Lord, the Lord's anointed, the psalmist, and even the current chanter of the psalm. My main aim in considering voices, which I'm just about to finish up with, is simply to call attention to how complicated the matter is in this psalm.

Now, let's talk a little bit about distant reading. I've already mentioned close reading. Many things have an opposite. This one happens to also, and as I recently discovered, it is called distant reading.

A strong inspiration for new critical close reading was a kind of scientism, a desire to impose clarity and objectivity.

A prime motivator for the modern version of distant reading is the ability of computers to grapple almost simultaneously with millions of words.

[19 : 41] Besides close reading, today's look at Psalm 2 will also engage in one modest instance of distant reading, computer not required.

St. John's Vancouver recently spent substantial time with the Book of Revelation. With Psalm 2 already internalized, when we went through the Book of Revelation, I had no need for note reading or page flipping or memory racking when Psalm 2 echoed in Revelation.

I think that is how we are expected to read the Bible, and so often we do not because of our inappropriate habits of mind.

In chapter 2 of Revelation, the faithful of Thyatira, which is the middle one of the seven churches listed, Thyatirans are promised power over the nations, which is elaborated on from Psalm 2.

He shall rule them with a rod of iron as the vessels of a potter, shall they be broken to shivers. The rule of the rod of iron occurs twice more in Revelation.

[21 : 02] In 12.5, as an attribute of the child of the distressed woman, just before the assertion of war in heaven, and in 19.5, as an attribute of the word of God on a white horse leading armies from heaven.

Where the psalm sees the rod of iron serving to break, Revelation emphasizes the use of it to rule. In both books, there is the image of a rod as a base metal tool of war rather than a ceremonial, precious metal symbol of passive authority.

By the way, the root meaning of the Hebrew word for rod incorporates a sense of smiting. In Psalm 2, the verse about the rod of iron and the potter's vessel culminates the preceding exposition.

If there's a turning point in that psalm, it's after it talks about the rod of iron. The disordered peoples of the whole earth will be brought under the rule of the Lord in a strenuous fashion.

This cosmic resolution echoes its way forward to find further firm expression in the book of Revelation. In between Psalm 2 and its echo in Revelation, there is a strong direct reference to this material in the fourth chapter of Acts.

[22 : 40] Peter and John have healed a lame man. Thousands are believing through their preaching. The two are detained overnight and questioned by a crowd of religious officials.

After being released, they report to their own company, after which that group offers up praise. Here are verses 24 through 26 from Acts 4.

They lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, thou art God, which has made heaven and earth and the sea and all that in them is, who by the mouth of thy servant David has said, why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things?

The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ. Now we'll shift and talk a little bit about intermediate reading, something a little closer to our psalm than Revelation or Acts are.

Psalm 2 reverberates within the book of Psalms. It seems worthwhile to say a few things about its place in the book and its relationships to other psalms.

[24 : 04] First of all, Bible reference books say that Psalm 2 is a royal psalm. This means that scholarship groups this psalm with about 10 others on the basis of content having to do with a king.

There is supposition that these psalms were used during the monarchy prior to 587 B.C. Here is what Anchor Bible Dictionary says about this particular psalm.

Psalm 2 was intended for a king's coronation, a time when the vassal nations would be considering rebellion. I could go on about how that view exhibits unidimensionality, reductive historicity, unbecoming certitude, and whatnot.

Whatever truth that notion does bring to the reading, I don't think that the perspective adds a great deal. I'd much rather look back to 1 Samuel 8 and the problematic aspect of kingships ever having

been established for Israel.

In certain respects, Psalm 2 is twinned with Psalm 1. How many of you knew that? Okay, I didn't either. So, we're all learning together.

[25 : 25] The ends of both psalms express concern about perishing from the way using the same two Hebrew words.

Psalm 1, which is very well known, is more individual and local and rooted, pun intended here, like a tree rooted by the water.

While Psalm 2 envisions many peoples and encompasses the uttermost parts of the earth. Taken as a pair, the two psalms are framed by a similar thought.

The first, about a single person. The second, about a group. Psalm 1 begins, Blessed is the man. Psalm 2 ends, Blessed are all they.

Our book of 150 psalms breaks down into five distinct collections. Collections whose endings are marked by a doxology.

[26 : 30] For example, the first of the five parts concludes with Psalm 41, whose closing verse reads, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting.

Amen and amen. Rabbinic tradition that goes back to the century before Jesus sees in the five collections a numeric parallel with the Torah, the first five books of both the Jewish and the Christian scriptures.

I bring in this point because I've been led to wonder if the doubleness of the first two psalms may present some parallel to the doubling of the account of the creation at the beginning of Genesis.

One more thing about the relationship of Psalm 1 to Psalm 2. This is something that resonates with the title provided for today's talk, Meditating Psalm 2.

This is where we're going to find the meditating that I didn't even know when I gave Alexandra the title. In the openings to these two psalms can be found a startling contrast.

[27 : 44] This contrast may remain invisible to the user of any translation. Of the handful of translations that I have compared, not a one of them brings this feature out in the translated words.

To its credit, the Jewish Publication Society translation does offer parallel notes that suggest the linkage. Here is how the word Haggah, which basically is meditation, well, we'll get into that, gets paired.

In Psalm 1, we have, In his law doth he meditate yege, day and night. In Psalm 2, we have, The people imagine yegu, a vain thing.

For the root verb Haggah, the Hebrew to English dictionary offers up this range of basic meanings. Moan, growl, utter, speak, muse, really, quite a package.

[28 : 56] The same word appears in Joshua 1, verse 8, just a few verses into the first book to come after the Torah.

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein, day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.

For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. That's a little more distant than intermediate, but we had to go back to Joshua for that one.

The basic meaning of vain thing is emptiness, empty like a vessel after whatever it contains has been poured out. In essence, nothingness.

From that, it's easy to see how a translator would choose to carry the nothingness back into the activity. To meditate on nothing thus becomes to imagine something that has no substance.

[30 : 05] The Bible has one other such usage of the verb haggah in a negative sense found in Proverbs, and we're doing Proverbs now in St. John's, 24, verses 1 and 2, where King James translates it as steadyth, which would have tied back into the sort of muse meaning of the verb.

Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them, for their heart steadyth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

There is a complementary quality to the first two Psalms. in a sense, Psalm 2 simply goes into detail about the chaff which the wind driveth away.

What a counterpart this presents to the picture of a tree planted by the rivers of water that anchors Psalm 1. As an aside, and wrapping up with intermediate reading, Psalm, Proverbs 24, resonates in so many ways with these themes.

Now, final section on fear and trembling. There is a great deal going on in and with Psalm 2. One hour on a Sunday morning has to settle for pursuing only a few threads.

[31 : 37] This last look at another piece of the weave zeros in on the people who feature prominently. The person who stands in the middle is the king, a role named three times in verses 2 and 6 and 10.

Singular in the middle instance, my king upon my holy hill of Zion, and plural in the contrasting first and last instances, the kings of the earth who set themselves, the kings who are admonished to be wise.

The kings are paralleled by rulers and judges. The singular king is paralleled by the Lord. The positions of those two are elevated, one on a holy hill and one in the heaven.

The heathen are named twice, in verses 2 and 8. paralleled with people and with uttermost parts of the earth, the heathen spread across the entire world as humanity and as geography.

The core issue seems to be the administration of human society. It is easy to see elements of the political functions that we know to interplay as legislative, executive, and judicial.

[33 : 07] not to mention the intimations of conflicts among separated earthly powers. The clearest before and after point in Psalm 2 lies between verses 9 and 10.

Verse 9 concludes a sort of crescendo of the rule of the Lord over the entire earth. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Verse 10 addresses and names the kings and judges to be affected, exhorting them to be wise and instructed. The following verse epitomizes what it is that they need to understand.

Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. If a single teaching lies at the heart of Psalm 2, this is it.

A few thousand years later, we can look around at the 190-some countries of the world and ask ourselves to what extent any of their rulers show significant evidence of having respect for this teaching.

[34 : 25] The fear of the Lord is a notion that lies distant from my everyday experience. I live under an attenuated ceremonial monarch whom I expect will never intersect with my life in any way that matters to me.

In effect, I live under a modern bureaucratic regime that impersonally extracts financial obeisance in the form of taxes and fees and could care less what I do otherwise, providing I do not feel called to interfere with its depersonalized machinery.

This comfortable distancing from the workings of Moloch and Mammon is what I too easily perceive as freedom. Our modern state finds it efficient to operate without causing us the patient's pain, thereby drawing unnecessary attention to its presence and activity.

All that said, my greatest anxieties probably attach and fears attach to trying to navigate bureaucracies and matters that affect my financial and personal well-being.

One recent example. I know my own body far better than my physician does. I recently had to push against a benign diagnosis to reach a specialist who confirmed that the matter was not benign.

[35 : 59] I think we all contend with this. One more sidelight on fear. Do you ever have an experience to which you could apply the phrase rejoice with trembling?

Something like joy arising from terror? I do. I have to confess that for me, and I know I'm a little odd, this state of mind accompanies the watching of a good horror movie.

The point here is less my individual psychology and more the fact that there does exist a primitive linkage between delight and extreme anxiety.

That linkage is strong enough to support an entire film genre. People like to be scared. The fear of the Lord is a major biblical theme, and how appropriate is this?

I had no idea we were heading into Proverbs and that we would be hearing about it almost every Sunday. This morning there is time to touch on just a few relevant passages.

[37 : 13] What first comes to my mind are the Proverbs. Proverbs 1.10, and perhaps even more suggestively, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, 1.7.

Notice how the first chapter of Proverbs resonates with the first chapters of Genesis. Here are three of them quickly pointed at.

1. Beginning. This is the first word of the Bible. A common word, and all by itself, perhaps not a lot to lean on.
2. The first half of verse 1-4 forms part of an introductory listing of the function of Proverbs to give subtlety to the simple.

Subtlety is quite a scarce word in the Bible, and this is King James' language. You probably won't find it used today. The meaning represented by subtlety is crafty, shrewd, and prudent, so both good and bad.

[38 : 34] this can have a negative or positive connotation. The point here is that subtlety is also the word that applies to the serpent in Genesis 3-1.

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. Remembering the proverb, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, here is an example of how correspondence in the King James Version helps a reader to see through the English surface of the text.

3-1. At the end of the first chapter of Proverbs it is said, for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices.

Fruit. Just after the subtle serpent appears in Genesis, the serpent and Eve have their conversation about the fruit. Same word.

This aspect of the fear of the Lord stretches back into the foundation of the world and into our essence as fallen creatures. of the Lord.

[40 : 00] Next stop on our quest for understanding the fear of the Lord is Deuteronomy 6. Toward the beginning of that chapter is proclaimed the essence of God's teaching for his people.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might. A few verses onward from that comes this elaboration in verse 12.

Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God and serve him and shalt swear by his name. This key passage is what Jesus cites as the great commandment adding to it Leviticus 19, 18 a call for love of neighbor. This aspect of the fear of the Lord attaches to the early days of God's people called out of Egypt and thus hovers in the background to the summation of the law provided by Jesus.

One last dimension of fear and trembling. The paired words found in Psalm 211 are also found paired in Psalm 55 5.

[41 : 17] The word for fear is common, the word for trembling is not. In Psalm 55 the connotation is entirely negative.

The psalmist says, Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me and horror hath overwhelmed me. In this context, the cause of the fear and trembling is the activity of a wicked enemy.

This passage is not the place to dwell for today's purposes. The stopover is to notice an identity, a sameness. The rendering of the phrase fear and trembling in the Septuagint, the ancient Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures, is identical with the Greek found in Philippians 2.12.

And I'll read that. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

[42 : 42] I close with bare statement of two points that emerge from this passage from Philippians. The first point is immediate to the text itself.

Paul exhorts the church in Philippi to proceed with fear and trembling as it strives to exist, quote, in the middle of a crooked and perverse nation, unquote.

I think this bit of semi-distant reading perceives connection to the world as it is presented in Psalm 2. The second and final point is a mention only.

The title of what is probably Soren Kierkegaard's most widely known work, Fear and Trembling, draws its phrase immediately from Philippians and less immediately from the larger context that we have taken a look at today.

Be careful if you decide to memorize a song.

[43 : 51] It will lead you in many directions. What does that mean again? Well, it's a complex of meanings.

I have five five let's see moan, growl, utter, speak, muse.

Okay. When you're saying earlier about your native language using, is that English as your native language? Yes, English is my native language. But I have good grounding in French.

I know. I can tell that by how you're talking. Could you say a little bit more about the background of what people mean when they talk about post-reading? Sure.

It means to pay. Well, it's a little different in the English and French traditions. I probably prefer the French tradition because it doesn't say we have the text and the text is the be-all and end-all and about all we need besides that is a dictionary and to really, really understand the words and the ambiguities and how the words may interrelate with each other.

[45 : 18] Close reading means to really respect text and to not use it as a jumping-off point for your fantasies but to see it as a having a meaning within the language and to drill into the language to find things that say a poet has noticed whether consciously or unconsciously and basically to arrive at a rich rather than a thin reading.

A poem can be very simple and sometimes all that work with the dictionary doesn't really lead you anywhere. It depends on the poet. In the French it's possibly even a little more a matter of really grasping the syntax and it's less isolated.

There is more concern for what tradition the form would fall into and needing to see it as an exemplar of the form or the genre.

Does that help? Yes. Thank you. A gospel writer like Matthew, this doesn't go against any of you said I'm sure, but a gospel writer like Matthew as I understand it, the whole flow of Matthew, he'd say the son of Psalm 2 has been raised from the dead and he's subduing the nations ironically by sending the church out to say God is reconciled to you by the death and resurrection of his son. The irony is that the fulfillment is the nations find out that they're being called into salvation, not being smashed with a rod of iron. The rod of iron smashes their evil but saves them.

[47 : 32] The nations are called into salvation. That's the irony that the gospel fulfills Psalm 2 in that strange way. No, I think that's a very good point, one that I didn't bring out but obviously Jesus did not, how could you ride on a donkey and have a rod of iron?

And, you know, Revelation doesn't talk about breaking, it talks about ruling. I think that's a good point. How do the people like current contemporary Jews, shall we say, interpret these allusions to the sun?

Ah, I didn't spend a lot of time on that. I will say that the Hebrew in that verse is next to impossible to parse and make sense out.

And the Robert Alter has a book, his own translation of the Psalms, a contemporary Jewish person who has a lot of involvement with Hebrew scriptures.

Hebrews, and the Hebrew, the Jews come up with different translations, they don't go there at all.

[49 : 15] The translator's handbook for the United Bible Society cautions its Bible translators not to do what has been done in the King James, that you have to be, in other words, you probably should not view this particular verse as flatly messianic for those reasons.

The verse or the psalm? The verse. Yeah, I'm talking about the entire psalm. Well, your question was about the verse, so you let me say something about the verse that I had sort of left out of the whole thing because it's really complicated and contentious.

Does that help? Do you think they're avoiding the elephant as a room to be? Yeah, we could probably spend a whole hour just on this matter, time?

But I think I would side with the handbook for translators and say, you know, take it easy on this particular verse, especially given the huge difficulties that there are in the Hebrew and that it's hard to even make sense of in the original language.

Does that also apply to verse 7, you are my son today? No. No, it doesn't. And I would have no difficulties saying that from a Christian reading that this is clearly messianic because the word is Messiah, anointed.

[51 : 16] And I think that in Jesus' day, in Mark 14, they asked him, are you the Messiah, the son of the blessed?

So they didn't understand that connection and I don't know if contemporary Judaism does as well. Well, no. I mean, contemporary Judaism would not be happy with this kind of reading of the Psalms.

Right. But they wouldn't have said either what the Pharisees... Unless it was Jews for Jesus. But they wouldn't have said that the high Pharisees said to Jesus either, as is recorded in Mark 14.

They wouldn't have made that connection either. Is that what you're saying? Well, I don't think Jews spend a lot. We're lucky if Jews spend time with the Bible rather than the law, the Talmud.

Yeah. What else could it mean? What else could what mean? The son, the reference to the son. If you don't want to think that it relates to Jesus, what else would it mean?

[52 : 24] Let me put it this way. At the time that this psalm emerged, and we don't have a date, but it was probably, I think we could say it was between 580, you know, possibly before 587.

I don't think it would have been before the reign of Solomon. And it wouldn't be, obviously, wouldn't be after Jesus.

Jesus. No. You have to say, before Jesus, in the context of Israel, how would they have understood this?

Jesus. And that would be very different from how Christians would understand it. So it's like two different reading communities.

I can understand. It would be different. I just don't know what other meaning you would put on that. On which?

[53 : 39] On son. On S-O-N. Yes. Are you talking about the kiss the son? If it is not a reference to Jesus, which we might want to say, yes it is, so you're Jewish, you're looking at this, what exactly does it mean?

All right. Well, I think one of the reasons that the translators of King James sliced through the difficulties in the Hebrew and said kiss the son is that there is a kiss of the son in Samuel, which sort of works with what the psalm is expressing.

So that might be how the Jewish community would have understood this verse pre-Jesus is the Christ.

How does the Septuagint translate it? I don't have that with me. I don't know. I don't remember.

That would be a good insight into how the pre-Christian Jewish society community moved out.

How did they translate that in the Greek? That's true too. Yeah, like I say, I sort of left that verse out, given the other things that I wanted to get at with Psalm 2.

[55 : 14] I think the fear and trembling is far more important than anything else in that psalm myself, but that's my emphasis. It reminds me, though, of the parable that Jesus talked about where he says the king went off to a far country and set his son over his kingdom, and they sent emissaries to the king, saying by no means will we be ruled over by him, right?

And how shall the king respond when he returns? That's what this also calls to mind. I mean, there's many layers to this, for sure, but I'm saying when he's saying, kiss my anointed, accept him, as my chosen one, and they say, no, no, no, not this one.

That was the rejection that Christ faced. So that's also, I think, there in some of it. Jason? I don't think a messianic reading of psalm 2 would conflict with how modern Jews would understand psalm 2.

it's because they do believe that there is a messiah prepared by God, by Jehovah, but it's still to be fulfilled.

They still believe in the writings of Isaiah. They still believe in the suffering servants. They still believe in the suit from the stump of Jesse.

[56 : 56] But it's just that the problem is they don't believe it's Jesus. Right? The son can refer to who they're still waiting for, the promised son of David, that's been unfolded through the covenants that they believe in the Old Testament.

Yeah, messiah is still a very resonant word for the Jews. Yeah. Yeah. It's still around.

Yeah. There's no conflict in reading the Jews. We're reading the same messiah, messiah, understanding the son. It's just a disagreement of who it is. Let's, Harvey and then Zoltan.

Oh, absolutely. Oh, that's good.

And comforting. The world, you know, to boil it down, the world is a mess, but things are going to be okay. Blessed are all they who put their trust in him.

[58 : 07] There's the last verse of the psalm. It's raging right now, so all the nations are. It's a comforting thought that our God is sovereign over this darkness. Yeah, well, just last night I was seeing some little video on a tweet about the steps that Trump would have to go through to launch a nuclear missile and how there aren't that many barriers.

In a silo, apparently, in one of the silos or silo areas in the United States, there are five people who have keys and only two of those five need to turn their keys.

There's a barrier called God. Zoltan? Just a follow-up. I don't believe that that is true about most of the Jewish community.

I can't speak for all of them, but I had a pastor who was raised an Orthodox Jew, and I think you touched on it, what he said that the reality is they spend a lot of time in Talmud. What he said is that they go through liturgical readings and they cycle through the year, and there are passages they just never read. Every first Sabbath of the year, they will be back at the same psalm.

[59 : 23] There's no way they get through the entire cycle. It's a one-year cycle or a three-year? Because we have a three-year cycle, don't we? Yeah. I'm just saying that they actually avoid, the rabbis avoid these difficult passages and they don't have good explanations for them.

And what I'm wondering about, because I'm not an expert in it, is back then it seemed like they understood the Messiah was the Son of God. They say it to Jesus, argue the Messiah, the Son of God, and I think modern Jews say, well, we are looking forward to the Messiah, but we don't believe he's going to be the Son of God in the way that the scriptures seem to teach that.

And they get around it by not really even dealing with it. Well, just as there are many streams in Christianity from the Gnostic and the Liberal to the hard-shell conservative, I think you've got the same thing in Judaism.

But he was an Orthodox Jew and he went to Labrie in Switzerland and somebody confronted him with He was visiting. Yes. He was kind of passing through.

Confronted him with Isaiah 53 and they didn't tell him what they were reading. They said, who do you think this is referring to? And he said, well, that's easy. That's Jesus. And then he thought he was reading from the New Testament.

[60 : 38] Gotcha. And I was confronted with the truth right then and there. So he didn't even know. And he was raised an Orthodox Jew. Yeah, well, we tend to rely on our traditions and unless we devote time to memorizing and meditating and reading and pondering, we are going to perhaps respect our traditions more than we respect the scriptures.

Have you read the Jewish prayer book? Because you read it from back to front of the Psalms or the very back of it. It's kind of interesting. I have a Jewish prayer book.

I have not read it. You may be talking also about the Hebrew scriptures and their order because the Psalms are part of the writings, which is the third portion after the law and the prophets.

I think the reference went to the Rock of Iron versus the gospel.

I don't think they're mutually exclusive. I think God's pattern is verse-to-verse words of truth. But if they're rejected, then stronger persuasion follows, as he did to his people.

[62 : 09] And, you know, I look at prophecies of the end times when nations really are brought into judgment, really difficult times are to happen. And obviously God has to bring it all to an end and write things by force, so to speak.

I think, you know, there's more than one application. Oh, I would agree. And I think, you know, I have affection for the book of Judges because it's, you know, it's not just the big picture, it's the little picture, up and down, up and down.

It's a cycle. Oh, we're doing well. We're in God's favor. We can just sort of forget about things and coast, get the boot, and then come to conscience and start doing better, and then, oh, we're doing good, we're on our own, bump, get the boot again.

Yes? I have a quick question about disincercating, if I don't see whether I understood it properly. Is it a more objective kind of, is it an attempt at a more objective view?

More generalized view? I'm not sure I would use the word objective, but it is a reaching, obviously, close reading. You've got this poem of 12 lines or 12 verses, and you're reading it intensively.

[63 : 43] Distant is, I'm seeing things way off here and way off there that really relate to what I'm reading here. It's not what you would do in new critical reading.

You wouldn't be going off here and here. And the reason, actually, the reason that I am using that phrase is I went to a workshop at UBC, I think, last fall, called How to Do Things with Millions of Words.

And it was quite inspiring. Heard lots of people who are working these days with computers and using computers to generate materials that they interpret.

And it's a kind of a reading through the computer of masses of amounts of text. I guess what we could, you know, in a sense, our meanings are being constituted in increasing ways by, say, you have a Gmail account and they've got all of your emails.

They know you in a way because they can compute and process all of these words and start to see patterns for you as related to Sheila. And the metadata.

[65 : 06] Yeah. Yeah. Well, metadata is something a little different. But, so, that's why I said computer not needed because in reading the Bible, admittedly, we stay within the frame of the Bible, but the Bible is actually not a book.

It's a library. It's 66 volumes. Okay. Well, I feel like, I mesmerize this. I feel like I read so quickly now.

I'm going to go home and read slowly. I think, I expected nothing less. Thoughtful, thought-provoking, fascinating, just prescription for the week.

Read slowly, read deeply. Thank you very much for a wonderful time. Thank you.