The Biblical Unitarian Podcast - by Dustin Smith, PhD

Episode 252–The Messiah in Psalm 89

"The podcast that aims to start conversations about the oneness and unity of God and about the humanity of Jesus."

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Introduction

We are in a series in which we work through the passages of the Old Testament that Jews and Christians came to understand as messianic prophecies. This week we are exploring Psalm 89 and the various ways it influenced the historical Jesus and the writers of the New Testament. Here are some questions I want to explore in this episode:

- In what ways does the 89th psalm discuss the covenant between God and David?
- How does the creator God empower the human Davidic king, according to Psalm 89?
- What can we infer about the identity of the Messiah based on how the NT authors drew upon Psalm 89, especially in its depiction of the heir to David's throne?

Let's find out in this week's episode of the BUP!

1. **A Close Look at Psalm 89**
    - *I will sing of the lovingkindness of the LORD forever; To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth. For I have said, "Lovingkindness will be built up forever; In the heavens You will establish Your faithfulness." "I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations." Selah.*
        i. The covenant with David has two parties: YHWH and the human king
        ii. David's seed forever - a member of the human race

iii. David's rule is linked with his throne–geographically located in Jerusalem, on the earth
iv. Luke draws upon this passage in Luke 1:31-33

- *The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD, A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him?*
  i. Who is like you among the sons of the mighty–angelic beings?
  ii. An argument against the preexistence of Jesus as an angel, while favoring Jesus as the human descendant of David.
- *O LORD God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. You rule the swelling of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them. You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain; You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm.*
  i. Yahweh is the ruler of the seas, waves, and bodies of water
  ii. He defeats his enemies (personified as chaotic bodies of water) with his mighty arm
- *The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all it contains, You have founded them. The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name.*
  i. You founded them, you created them–the creator is a single person
- *You have a strong arm; Your hand is mighty, Your right hand is exalted. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You. How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! O LORD, they walk in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all the day, And by Your righteousness they are exalted. For You are the glory of their strength, And by Your favor our horn is exalted. For our shield belongs to the LORD, And our king to the Holy One of Israel.*
  i. Shifting back to the discussion of Yahweh and the king–the Davidic king.
- *Once You spoke in vision to Your godly ones, And said, "I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people.*
  i. God has helped someone else, God has exalted one from among the people
  ii. We are going to see how God has exalted, empowered, and authorized the king
- *"I have found David My servant; With My holy oil I have anointed him, With whom My hand will be established; My arm also will strengthen him.*
  i. God's hand will strengthen David, David will be established by God
- *"The enemy will not deceive him, Nor the son of wickedness afflict him. "But I shall crush his adversaries before him, And strike those who hate him. "My*

faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him, And in My name his horn will be exalted. "I shall also set his hand on the sea And his right hand on the rivers.

i. I will set his hand on the sea and on the rivers

ii. God shares his authority over creation, namely the chaotic waters, with this human king

- Every time Jesus walks on water, calms the storm, or performs any miracle involving nature, this is due to his empowerment from Yahweh, rather than a suggestion that Jesus is Yahweh himself.

- *"He will cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.'*
  i. Yahweh is the Father of David, Yahweh is David's God
- *"I also shall make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth.*
  i. "Firstborn" could mean first in rank or first in time.
    - God's wisdom, in Proverbs, is firstborn in time
    - God's king gets exalted to first in rank
- *"My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall be confirmed to him. "So I will establish his descendants forever And his throne as the days of heaven.*
  i. Another link to the Davidic Covenant–the human descendants of David
- *"If his sons forsake My law And do not walk in My judgments, If they violate My statutes And do not keep My commandments, Then I will punish their transgression with the rod And their iniquity with stripes. "But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. "My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. "Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. "His descendants shall endure forever And his throne as the sun before Me. "It shall be established forever like the moon, And the witness in the sky is faithful." Selah.*
  i. Assurance that the Davidic dynasty will last forever
- *But You have cast off and rejected, You have been full of wrath against Your anointed You have spurned the covenant of Your servant; You have profaned his crown in the dust. You have broken down all his walls; You have brought his strongholds to ruin. All who pass along the way plunder him; He has become a reproach to his neighbors. You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries; You have made all his enemies rejoice. You also turn back the edge of his sword And have not made him stand in battle. You have made his splendor to cease And cast his throne to the ground. You have shortened the days of his youth; You have covered him with shame. Selah.*
  i. Recognition that the Davidic dynasty now is not doing so well, thus looking forward to its restoration with a new Davidic king/

- *How long, O LORD? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath burn like fire? Remember what my span of life is; For what vanity You have created all the sons of men! What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah. Where are Your former lovingkindnesses, O Lord, Which You swore to David in Your faithfulness? Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Your servants; How I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples, With which Your enemies have reproached, O LORD, With which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed. Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen.*

  (Psa 89:1-52)

2. **The Use of Psalm 89 in the Gospel of Luke**
   - *The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."* (Luke 1:30-33)
     i. Influenced by Ps 89:3-4

3. **The Use of Psalm 89 in the Book of Hebrews**
   - *When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"? And again, "I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"? And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM."* (Heb 1:3-6)
     i. Influenced by the "firstborn" language in Psalm 89:27.

4. **The Use of Psalm 89 in the Book of Revelation**

   - *When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony*

which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Rev 6:9-10)

i. Influenced in part by Psalm 89:46

Thanks for listening to this week's episode!

Join us next week as we look at Psalm 110.

Please look forward to our next episode.

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