

THE USE OF THE PSALM 2 IN LUKE-ACTS

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Introduction

Psalm 2 is the most quoted passage in the New Testament. Its significance for Luke-Acts can be seen most clearly in the allusions to it at Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:22) and transfiguration (Luke 9:35) and in the quotations of it in the disciples' prayer of Acts 4:25-26 and Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13:33. This paper will explore Psalm 2 in its original context, then examine each of its four clear quotations and allusions in Luke-Acts, then explore some of the echoes of Psalm 2 in Luke-Acts, and finally make some conclusions about the role Psalm 2 plays in Luke's narrative.

Psalm 2 in Its Original Context

When speaking of the original context of a psalm it is important to establish what is meant by "original context." As Bruce Waltke has observed, the Psalms have four contexts: their context as a hymn written by the original poet, their context within the First Temple worshiping community, their context within the Psalter, and their context within the Old and New Testaments as a whole.¹ Usually when the original meaning of Psalm 2 is discussed it is meaning for the First Temple worshiping community that is considered. In that sense this psalm is almost unanimously considered to be a coronation hymn, sung by the king at his accession.² Some have postulated that it was also part of an annual celebration of the king's enthronement.³

¹ Bruce K. Waltke, "A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 10-16.

² Bruce K. Waltke, "Ask of Me, My Son: Exposition of Psalm 2," *Crux* 43.4 (Winter 2007): 3; James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 45; Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Revised Edition 5; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 89; etc.

³ Waltke, "Ask of Me," 4.

The Psalm is “a four-act play.”⁴ In verses 1-3 we read of the empty plans of the nations and their kings who want to free themselves from subjection to Yahweh’s anointed king (מָשִׁיחַ). In verses 4-6 we hear Yahweh’s response, which begins with a taunt of the nations and kings and ends with God’s declaration that he has established his king on his holy hill. In verses 7-9 the king says what Yahweh has spoken over him: that he is Yahweh’s son and that Yahweh will give him the ends of the earth. Finally in verses 10-12 a warning is given to the kings and rulers of the earth that they should serve Yahweh and kiss his son.

It was at the accession of a new king that vassal states would tend to rise up and try to break the yoke of their overlord.⁵ In Egypt a new Pharaoh would fight in a sham battle against rebellious states as part of the coronation liturgy.⁶ This suggests all the more that the psalm was originally sung at the enthronement of the new king. Furthermore the word “today” in verse 7 suggests that the psalm addresses a particular day in the life of the king.⁷ The psalm, then, speaks of the foolishness of the nations and their rulers thinking they can rebel against Yahweh’s anointed king at his enthronement when in reality it is Yahweh who is in control, and he has established this new king and promised him the ends of the earth as his possession (v. 8). No one will be able to resist this new king (v. 9), and the nations are better off serving Yahweh and submitting to the king, where they will find blessing (vv. 11-12; cf. Ps 1:1).

The First Temple context is only one of the initial contexts of this psalm, however. This psalm was adapted and placed with Psalm 1 at the front of the Psalter by the

⁴ Waltke, “Ask of Me,” 3.

⁵ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 126; Waltke, “Ask of Me,” 4.

⁶ Waltke, “Ask of Me,” 4.

⁷ As Goldingay notes, it cannot be the day the king is physically born because the king speaks of what he has heard Yahweh say to him (John Goldingay, *Psalms* [3 vols.; Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006-2008], 1:100).

inspired⁸ shapers of the Psalter in order to serve a purpose that was different from that which the original poet intended for the psalm. With the collapse of the monarchy in 586 BC it is a wonder that the Psalter would contain royal psalms at all. What is even more remarkable is that “royal psalms”⁹ were given prominence in the Psalter. Gerald Wilson has demonstrated that royal psalms occur at the “seams” of Books I-III of the Psalter (Pss 2, 72, and 89), places “where editorial activity might reasonably be expected in order to ‘stitch together’ earlier groupings of psalms in a meaningful relationship.”¹⁰ This suggests that the Psalter was constructed in such a way as to have “eschatological overtones and [seek] to establish a strongly *messianic* reading of the first three books.”¹¹ Jamie Grant argues that the royal thread of the first three books continues through Books IV and V, giving the entire Psalter a royal emphasis.¹² Many of the royal psalms are placed alongside torah psalms at key places in the Psalter as well (Ps 2 with Ps 1; Pss 18, 20-21 with Ps 19; Ps 118 with Ps 119).¹³ Grant argues that these psalms are juxtaposed “to direct our attention back to the kingship law” of Deuteronomy 17:14-20, where the king is told to meditate on Torah. The king then becomes the “archetypal believer,” whom all other Israelites should follow.¹⁴

⁸ So VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 90

⁹ Gunkel’s category of “royal psalms” has rightly been challenged, most notably by John Eaton, who argues that most of the individual psalms and the psalms attributed to David are to be read just as much as royal psalms as the few that Gunkel has labeled “royal psalms” (J. H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* [SBT 2/32; London: SCM, 1976], 1-26). In this sense, half of the Psalms can be called “royal psalms.” Nevertheless there are a few that have a special significance for the king that are not as directly democratized (Pss 2, 45, 89, 110, etc.).

¹⁰ Gerald H. Wilson, “The Structure of the Psalter,” in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches* (ed. David Firth and Philip S. Johnston; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005), 233.

¹¹ Wilson, “The Structure of the Psalter,” 233, emphasis his.

¹² Jamie A. Grant, “The Psalms and the King,” in *Interpreting the Psalms* (ed. Firth and Johnston), 108-109.

¹³ Psalm 19 is at the center of Book I and Psalm 119 is at the center of Books IV-V. Psalms 1-2, of course, begin the Psalter.

¹⁴ Grant, “The Psalms and the King,” 115-116.

Notably Psalms 1 and 2 are linked by more than just proximity. Waltke notes that the only other psalms in Book I that do not have a superscription are Psalms 10 and 33, which are intentionally missing superscriptions in order for them to be read with their preceding psalms. Could it be that there is no superscription on Psalm 2 because it is intended to be conjoined with Psalm 1? There are numerous lexical links between the two psalms:

The first verset of Psalm 1 (1:1a) and the last verset of Psalm 2 (2:12b) begin with *'ashrê* (“how rewarding is the life of”). In other words, *'ashrê* functions as an *inclusio* unifying the two psalms. The introductory stanzas of both psalms use *hāgâ* (“to meditate,” 1:2; “to plot,” 2:1). The last verses of both psalms use the metaphor of *derek* (“way”) in connection with *'ābad* (“perish,” 1:6; 2:12). Both Psalms also employ terms belonging to the semantic domain of “mock” (*leṣîm*, “mockers” [against *I AM*’s law], 1:1, and *lā’ag* “derision” of [*I AM* against rebels to his rule], 2:4).¹⁵

The conjoining of Psalms 1 and 2 is likely why in some manuscripts Acts 13:33 refers to Ps 2:7 as “the first psalm.”¹⁶

The fact that Psalm 2 is part of a two-part introduction to the Psalter gives it a special significance in the mind of the inspired shapers of the Psalter. When the Psalter was compiled, Psalm 2 was not read in reference to a present king but to the eschatological messianic king of the line of David. Psalms 1-2, then, are the Psalter’s paradigm for what the messiah will be.¹⁷ The messiah announced in Psalm 2 is the one who has the task of making Psalm 1 the

¹⁵ Waltke, “Ask of Me,” 2.

¹⁶ Alternatively it has been suggested that Psalm 1 was viewed as an unnumbered preamble (Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 113-114). For a helpful discussion of this variant, see Bruce M. Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (4th rev. ed.; London: United Bible Societies, 1994), 363-365.

¹⁷ This is not to say that Psalms 1-2 have no significance apart from their Christological interpretation. Grant (“The Psalms and the King,” 118) rightly argues that both democratization and reinterpretation of the royal psalms are intended:

The individual in Ps. 1 is to be read as the king and the king in Ps. 2 is to be understood as the unnamed individual. Ps. 1 ‘democratizes’ the royalty of Ps. 2, but at the same time Ps. 2 adds a royal flavour to the ‘everyman’ inclusiveness

reality.¹⁸ Therefore it is no mistake that Psalm 2 is the most frequently quoted scripture in the New Testament; it was intended by the inspired shapers of the Psalter to be the clearest expression of who the messiah would be. This does not suggest that the original psalmist's intention was distorted by the shapers of the Psalter who came to the Psalms with an externally-rooted messianism. Rather the messianism developed naturally out of the divinely inspired expressions of psalms such as Psalm 2 that never found their fulfillment in a First Temple Davidic king. What Psalm 2 declares to be true (a kingdom that extends to the ends of the earth, ruled by Yahweh's anointed Davidic king in Zion) *never found fulfillment in any of the Davidic kings leading up to the exile and therefore demanded a messianic interpretation.*¹⁹ Therefore Psalm 2 is intended to be the basis for understanding what the Davidic messiah will look like.²⁰

Psalm 2:7 in Luke 3:22

The first clear allusion to Psalm 2 in Luke-Acts is found in the baptism narrative (Luke 3:22). Luke follows Mark 1:11 word-for-word (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα). The first part of this quotation is a clear allusion to Psalm 2:7 (Υἱός μου εἶ σύ), not only because of lexical similarities, but also because of the fact that in both passages God speaks

of Ps. 1. The figures of king and anonymous believer merge. This ambiguity presents us, as believing readers, with an example to follow – the king is presented as one grounded in the word of Yahweh and consciously taking refuge in him, and we believers are to do no less. The true king has set an example for all who would follow him, basing his life in the torah (Luke 4:16-21) and living his life in dependence upon his Father (John 5:30).

¹⁸ VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 90.

¹⁹ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:95-96.

²⁰ Because of this we can no longer be comfortable with statements like that of Joseph A. Fitzmyer: "Psalm 2 is a royal psalm, 'his anointed' refers to an unnamed historical king, and it did not yet have a messianic connotation in the strict sense, i.e., referring to an unexpected or awaited anointed figure. As the words are now applied to the risen Christ, they take on in this context a Christian messianic connotation" (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Anchor Bible 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998], 517). What he means by "not yet" is unclear: in the time of the original composition? In the first century? Furthermore, whose connotation is he referring to? Could God have connoted this from the beginning – in his decision to establish a monarchy in the first place?

to a Davidic king and confers on him sonship. Codex Bezae contains a variant reading, where more of Psalm 2:7 is quoted and the other part of the quotation is absent. This variant likely arose as an attempt to make the allusion more explicit.²¹

The second part of this quotation is likely an allusion to Isa 42:1.²² While the Old Greek rendering of Isa 42:1 uses different lexemes than Luke 3:22, a different rendering is given in Matt 12:18 that has strong links with what we read in Luke 3:22:

Isa 42:1 (MT): יְהוָה עֲבָדִי יִבְרָאֵת בְּיָרֵי הַצָּר הַנְּפִישׁ

Isa 42:1 (LXX): Ἰακωβ ὁ παῖς μου, ἀντιλήμψομαι αὐτοῦ, Ἰσραηλ ὁ ἐκλεκτός μου, προσεδέξατο αὐτὸν ἢ ψυχὴ μου

Matt 12:18 (quoting Isa 42:1): ἰδοὺ ὁ παῖς μου ὃν ἠρέτισα, ὁ ἀγαπητός μου εἰς ὃν εὐδόκησεν ἢ ψυχὴ μου

Luke 3:22: ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα

Theodotion, Aquila, and Symmachus also have εὐδοκέω rather than προσδέχομαι, lending more support to the idea that Isa 42:1 is behind this expression. Furthermore, when Luke records the voice at the transfiguration (to be discussed below), he changes Mark's ἀγαπητός to ἐκλελεγμένος, bringing that expression into closer conformity with Isa 42:1 LXX.

²¹ This variant is also found in Justin, *Dial.* 88; 103; and in Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.6.25. While a few scholars argue that Codex Bezae is the better reading (for example, see Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* [New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005], 158-161, and Martin Rese, *Alttestamentliche Motive in der Christologie des Lukas* [SNT 1; Gerd Mohn: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1969], 193-196), the majority rightly see the more widely attested reading as being original (Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* [JSNTSup 12; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987], 100-101). David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel ("Luke," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007], 280) give five reasons for rejecting the Codex Bezae reading:

First, this reading is supported by only one major Greek manuscript. Second, other similar examples of assimilation to the LXX can be identified in the Western text (e.g., Acts 7:37; 13:33). Third, composite citations are known to have been reduced to one OT text. Fourth, a harmonization with Matthew would be more likely than with Mark. Fifth, a later scribe might have harmonized this citation with the one in Acts 13:33.

²² For a discussion of the possibilities, see Bock, *Proclamation*, 99-105, or Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (2 vols.; BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994, 1996), 1:341-343.

There are a number of reasons why it would be likely for Luke to allude to Isa 42 at this point in his narrative. First, in Luke 2:25, Simeon is said to be waiting for “the consolation (παράκλησις) of Israel,” a likely allusion to Isa 40:1 (Παρακαλεῖτε παρακαλεῖτε τὸν λαόν μου). There are also echoes of Isa 40:5 LXX (ὄψεται πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ) and Isa 42:6 (φῶς ἐθνῶν) in Simeon’s response to seeing Jesus (εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου τὸ σωτήριόν σου in Luke 2:30 and φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν in 2:32). Second, John’s ministry has just been introduced in terms of Isa 40 (Luke 3:4-6; cf. 1:76). Third, Isa 42:1 begins the first Servant Song, which declares that God has put his Spirit upon the servant, who will bring forth justice to the nations. The baptism is the account of God’s Spirit coming upon his servant Jesus. Fourth, the prevalence of the Isaianic new exodus motif in both Mark and Luke make this allusion almost certain. Therefore we can conclude that Luke (via Mark) is intentionally alluding to Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1 in this verse, but why?²³

It is already clear within Luke’s narrative that Luke is portraying Jesus as the Davidic messiah.²⁴ When Gabriel announces Jesus’ birth to Mary he says, “He will be great and will be called *the Son of the Most High*. And the Lord God will give to him *the throne of his father David*, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32-33).²⁵ Notice that like in Psalm 2, the Davidic king is called God’s son,

²³ Rikk E. Watts, “Mark,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. Beale and Carson), 122. Watts argues that because ἀγαπητός is syntactically connected to υἱός rather than to the clause that follows it cannot be part of the Isa 42 allusion. He suggests that it comes from an earlier form of the Psalms targumic tradition (Watts, “Mark,” 123). Others have postulated an allusion here to Gen 22 or Exod 4:22-23. Bock gives good reason to reject these theories (*Proclamation*, 100-105). Either way it is clear that Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1 are the main texts Luke alludes to.

²⁴ For a lengthier discussion of Luke’s presentation of Jesus as the Davidic messiah in Luke 1-2, see Mark L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* (JSNTSup 110; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 76-125.

²⁵ All English Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

confirming our argument that God's declaration of Jesus' sonship at the baptism has messianic overtones. Jesus is also presented as the Davidic king with repeated references to "the house of David" (Luke 1:27, 69; 2:4) and "the city of David" (2:4, 11) and with the echoes of Hannah's prayer in the Magnificat and the Benedictus. Finally, in Luke 2:11, the angel who appears to the shepherds makes it explicit, calling the newborn baby "a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Jesus' messiahship is also proclaimed by Simeon (2:25-35). Then in 3:15, John is asked if he is the Christ, upon which he answers that one is coming who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. When the Spirit descends upon Jesus in 3:22, the expectation is that Jesus is the one who will be able to baptize with the Holy Spirit (and hence, the messiah). It is this expectation that is confirmed by God's pronouncement of the Psalm 2:7 decree over Jesus.

But if the function of the Psalm 2:7 quotation is to confirm what has already been spoken by Gabriel (1:33), by the angel who appears to the shepherds (2:11), by the righteous and devout man Simeon (2:25ff), and by the eschatological prophet John (3:16-17), why quote the psalm? Why does God not just say, "This is the messiah"? If it is correct, as most scholars assume, to consider Psalm 2 a coronation hymn, and the decree, "You are my son," to be an expression spoken over the king when he is anointed, perhaps God quotes Psalm 2:7 to indicate his anointing of Jesus for his messianic role. A few observations confirm this. First, the descent of the Spirit upon (note Luke's use of ἐπί in contrast to Mark's εἰς) Jesus is an anointing, much like the Spirit "rushed upon [ἐπί] David" from the day he was anointed by Samuel (1 Sam 16:13).²⁶ Second, in Luke 4:18-19, Jesus quotes the passage from Isaiah where it says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon [ἐπί] me, because he has anointed [ἔχρισεν] me." It was at the baptism that the Spirit came upon Jesus; it seems natural that this would be the anointing that this text

²⁶ Stephen B. Moore, "The Progressive Ascension to Kingship of Christ in Luke-Acts" (unpublished paper presented to David W. Pao's "Acts and Early Christian Historiography" class at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL, 12 April, 2010), 7.

refers to in Luke's/Jesus' mind.²⁷ Third, Peter proclaims in Acts 10:37-38 that "after the baptism that John proclaimed, . . . God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power." Psalm 2:7 expresses the decree that was spoken by God over the Davidic king as he was anointed, and Luke tells us that God audibly spoke these words from heaven when Jesus was baptized. Therefore Psalm 2:7 serves the function in Luke 3:22 of demonstrating the moment of Jesus' anointing by God to the role of messiah.²⁸

In addition to the function of demonstrating the baptism as the moment of Jesus' anointing for messiahship, the Psalm 2:7 allusion in Luke 3:22 serves a couple other roles. The merging of Psalm 2:7 (the most significant psalm in the Psalter for describing the Davidic messiah) with Isaiah 42:1 (the first song of the suffering servant) serves to show that the Suffering Servant and the Davidic Messiah are one and the same person: Jesus of Nazareth.²⁹ Finally it should be noted that the audible declaration by God of Jesus' sonship is about the strongest confirmation of sonship one can present. Just as Luke has presented angels, a righteous and pious man, and John the Baptist as witnesses to Jesus' messiahship, the audible voice from heaven adds a final witness that is the most reliable of all. *Therefore the function of Psalm 2 in*

²⁷ So Bock, *Luke*, 1:22.

²⁸ This does not take away from the value of other anointings. Just as David was anointed multiple times (1 Sam 16:13; 2 Sam 2:4; 5:3), Jesus is anointed at his baptism, his resurrection, and his ascension (Moore, "Progressive Ascension," 1-27). One could even say that both David (1 Sam 2:10, 35) and Jesus (Luke 1:35) were anointed from birth.

²⁹ So Bock, 1:30. *Pace* Peter Doble, "Lk. 24.26, 44—Songs of God's Servant: David and his Psalms in Luke-Acts," *JSNT* 28 (2006): 267-283. Doble argues that Luke's presentation of the passion is entirely dependent upon the Psalms without any clear allusion to the suffering servant. For Doble, *παῖς* is not a term that comes from Isaiah, but from the Psalms (17:1 LXX; 68:18 LXX; 85:16 LXX; cf. Doble, "Songs of God's Servant," 275), and Luke's idea that the messiah *must* suffer does not come from a merging of the Davidic messiah with the Isaianic suffering servant, but from the concept of the Davidic messiah alone. While Doble is to be commended for showing from the Psalms alone that the messiah must suffer, it must not be neglected that Luke does make a concerted effort to merge the two figures. In Doble's essay, "The Psalms in Luke-Acts," in *The Psalms in the New Testament* (ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 83-117, Doble argues that the D reading of Luke 3:22 should be preferred to the text of NA27 (p. 117 n. 85). As was mentioned above, the evidence for this is too slim (see esp. Bock, *Proclamation*, 100-101). It seems that Luke is intentionally following Mark in melding the figures of the Davidic messiah and the Isaianic suffering servant here in Luke 3:22.

*Luke 3:22 is to confirm that Jesus is the messiah, to demonstrate that the messiah and the suffering servant are the same person, and to reveal Jesus' baptism as the moment of his anointing for his messianic call.*³⁰

Before moving on to the allusion in Luke 9:35, we should briefly consider the temptation narrative, which follows Luke 3:22 in referring to Jesus as the Son of God.³¹ Satan offers to give (δώσω) Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world” (4:5-6; cf. Ps 2:8). The relationship between this offer and the reference to Jesus as the Son of God (4:3, 9) suggests that Luke was thinking of Psalm 2 here. The idea of the Son of God possessing the ends of the earth emerges again in Acts 1:8 (there alluding more directly to Isa 49:6, though Luke’s idea that the gospel would go to the end of the earth was likely influenced by both Ps 2:8 and Isa 49:6). The allusion here to Psalm 2:8 and the quotation of Psalm 2:1-2 in Acts 4:25-26 (to be dealt with below) suggest that Luke has in mind not just Ps 2:7 in its relation to Jesus, but the entire psalm. This will become clearer as our study progresses.

Psalm 2:7 in Luke 9:35

The second clear allusion to Psalm 2 in Luke is similar to the first in a number of ways but with a few key differences. Again the allusion comes through a voice from heaven, the wording that alludes specifically to Psalm 2:7 is similar (the only difference being the use of the demonstrative pronoun instead of the second-person pronoun), and an allusion to Isa 42:1 is

³⁰ One could also argue that because the declaration is made directly to Jesus (note the 2nd person), in contrast to the declaration made at Luke 9:35, which is to Peter, James, and John, that there is significance in this fact. Does this demonstrate that Jesus was also dependent on his Father? Before he goes under temptation that is centered upon his identity as the Son of God (Luke 4:1-13), he receives the affirmation of God in regard to his sonship. If this is the case, this may explain the rest of the quotation. It is not just that Luke is highlighting two OT texts. God is doing for Jesus what God did for every Davidic king and for the people Israel (Isa 41:8) – affirming his son.

³¹ For a more detailed discussion of this allusion, see Michael Labahn, “The Psalms in Q,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament* (ed. Moyise and Menken), 55-56. See also W. J. C. Weren, “Psalm 2 in Luke-Acts: An Intertextual Study,” in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel* (ed. Sipke Draisma; Kampen: Kok, 1989), 200.

present. Luke 9:35 differs from Luke 3:22 in its literary context, in the change of pronouns, in Luke's decision (against Mark) to use the word ἐκλελεγμένος rather than ἀγαπητός, and in the use of the phrase αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε (following Mark but reversing the word order) where Luke 3:22 has ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα. Each of these differences from the previous allusion is significant.

The context of this passage is very important. Herod is beginning to wonder who Jesus is (9:7-9) and the disciples are finally absolutely certain that he is the messiah (9:20). Jesus has just explained for the first time that his role as messiah will involve suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection (9:22) and that the disciples too must take up their crosses (9:23). At this point in the life of the disciples (and in the heart of Luke's readers), one of the biggest internal struggles begins: Is Jesus worth suffering for? Jesus makes the answer abundantly clear in verses 24-27: efforts to save your life will fail (9:24), efforts to gain the whole world will not profit you (9:25; cf. Luke 4:5-8), and being ashamed of Jesus will have ghastly consequences (9:26). In verse 27, Jesus then declares the imminence of the kingdom of God. Luke highlights the connection between that prediction and the transfiguration narrative by saying, "Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray" (9:28). Though the meaning of verse 27 is debated, it seems quite likely that Luke saw the prophecy partially fulfilled in Peter, James, and John's witness of Jesus in his glory.³² This event, then, is a taste of the kingdom of God through experiencing its king in his glory. Likely, this experience was meant to give the three disciples the confidence needed to continue to follow a messiah who had just declared that he would suffer and die. The portrait of the messiah given in Psalm 2, where he is said to inherit the ends of the earth and dash the nations into pieces, seems to be in stark contrast to what Jesus has just revealed. The temptation can be the same that John the Baptist faced when he asked, "Are you the one who is to come, or

³² Bock, *Luke*, 1:859.

shall we look for another?” Can Jesus really be the Davidic messiah / Son of God if he suffers and dies at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes? And if so, is he worth following, or would it be better to embrace Yahweh through the Law and the Prophets without embracing Yahweh’s messiah? It is this question that is answered in the transfiguration.³³

Many have noted the allusions to and echoes of Moses on Mount Sinai that are present throughout this text.³⁴ As if to present Jesus as the new Moses, Jesus’ face is altered and God speaks to him in a cloud, but unlike Moses, Jesus’ clothes become dazzling white. Then, to make unmistakable Jesus’ superiority to Moses, Moses and Elijah appear, but it is Jesus, not Moses, who is identified as God’s Son and Chosen One. *He* is the one to listen to.³⁵ This is remarkable because Moses and Elijah had just spoken of Jesus’ “exodus” (9:31), so we can see that they are a good source for truth about Christ. But it is the voice of Jesus that God wants the disciples to listen to. Therefore one of the functions of the identification of Jesus as God’s Son through an echo of Psalm 2:7 is to demonstrate his superiority to Moses.³⁶ Jesus has already made this claim. In Luke 6:1-5, when asked why Jesus’ disciples violate the Law of Moses, Jesus answers that David and his disciples once did the same and therefore the Son of Man (= “Son of David” in Jesus’/Luke’s theology) is Lord over the Sabbath. Now God confirms this claim by placing Jesus alongside Moses and Elijah and highlighting Jesus as the one who is the Son, the Chosen One, and the one to be listened to.

³³ So Bock, *Luke*, 1:862.

³⁴ For example, see Strauss, *Davidic Messiah*, 268-272, and Pao and Schnabel, “Luke,” 311-312.

³⁵ Note that Luke makes this even clearer than Mark as Luke changes Mark’s ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ to αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε.

³⁶ So Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (2 vols.; Anchor Bible 28-28A; New York, Doubleday, 1981, 1985), 1:803.

It is not entirely clear why Luke changes Mark's *ὁ ἀγαπητός* to *ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος*, whereas he does not do so at Luke 3:22. Many have suggested that this is to make another allusion to Isa 42:1.³⁷ This is likely correct. The expression *αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε* is likely an allusion to Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses tells the Israelites that a prophet like him will arise and they are to listen to him.³⁸ If these identifications are correct, then this voice from heaven affirms that Jesus is the prophet like Moses, the Davidic messiah, *and* the suffering servant. This, then, is the basis of his superiority to Moses (and Elijah).

Again it is important to emphasize this superiority at this point in Luke's narrative because the temptation can be to decide that Jesus is not worth following if following him means taking up a cross daily. By affirming that Jesus is the Son spoken of in Psalm 2, God not only declares Jesus' greatness, but also promises the hope that is expressed in the rest of Psalm 2. It is unlikely that someone familiar with the OT could hear such an important passage of Scripture and think of the *title* given to the messiah ("my son") without also thinking of the *promise* given to the messiah ("I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession"). That Luke sees the promise of Psalm 2:8-9 as referring to Jesus just as much as the title of Psalm 2:7 is clear from the echoes of Psalm 2:8 elsewhere in Luke-Acts (most notably Luke 4:5-8 and Acts 1:8). For now it is important to note that *Psalm 2:7 functions in Luke 9:35 in a couple ways: 1) it again identifies/confirms Jesus as the Davidic messiah in order for the statement to be made that Jesus is superior to Moses and that listening to him is more important than listening to Moses or Elijah; and 2) it provides hope that the suffering of Jesus will not be the end of the story, the plot of the rulers against Jesus will be in vain, and Jesus will eventually have all of the glory promised to the messiah in Psalm 2.*

³⁷ Pao and Schnabel, "Luke," 281; Bock, *Proclamation*, 115; etc.

³⁸ Bock, *Proclamation*, 115; Pao and Schnabel, "Luke," 312. Bock observes that Luke's change to the word order brings this quotation in line with the LXX.

Psalm 2:1-2 in Acts 4:25-26

Two times in Acts we find Psalm 2 directly quoted with a citation formula. The first is in Acts 4, where Peter and John are threatened by the chief priests and elders and told not to speak in the name of Jesus any longer. They return to their friends and pray to the Lord, who is addressed using two psalms, Ps 145:5 LXX and Ps 2:1-2 LXX. We will deal with the two quotations in reverse order. In Acts 4:25-26, the disciples address God in the following way:

[Sovereign Lord], who through the mouth of our father David,
your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

“Why did the nations rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed”

Here the first two verses of Psalm 2 are quoted in an effort of the disciples to remind themselves of whom they are addressing – the one who predicted the very things that are happening. The disciples make it clear how they see this psalm fulfilled in their day. In verse 27 they specifically identify Jesus as the Anointed, Herod and Pontius Pilate (and perhaps the “rulers of the people” addressed in 4:8) as the kings and rulers, and “the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel” who have gathered together against Jesus as those spoken of in Ps 2:1. The disciples say that these “gathered together . . . to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place” (Acts 4:27-28). In other words, not only does the one who sits in the heavens laugh (Ps 2:3), but he also predestines that the enemies do the very things that accomplish his purpose. Psalm 2 is such a wise choice of OT text to give the disciples hope in their prayer. The two verses that are quoted demonstrate that what has been done to Jesus is what God predestined and said in Psalm 2 would be done. So the first purpose of quoting Psalm 2 is to give the assurance that God is not thwarted by the plans of the rulers who plotted against Jesus. But the psalm goes

further, ultimately expressing the promise that the ends of the earth will be the messiah's possession. As the psalm closes with a call to the nations to serve God, the disciples are encouraged to speak the word of God (about the messiah) with boldness (Acts 4:31). They have recognized that the words of the rulers are emptiness, just as Psalm 2:1 states, and that they should therefore listen to God rather than men (Acts 4:19-20).

Now, returning to Acts 4:24 we can look at the other psalm that is quoted here. God is referred to as the Lord "who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them" (Acts 4:24). This is a common way of referring to God that is ultimately rooted in the Ten Commandments, where God is spoken of in this way as a basis for resting on the Sabbath (Exod 20:11). This expression is then taken up in both Neh 9:6 and Ps 146:5 (145:5 LXX). The wording in Acts 4:24 is almost identical to the wording in both Exod 20:11 and Ps 145:5 LXX. Ps 145 LXX warns the reader to not put his trust in rulers (ἄρχοντες) but in God, who will fulfill the hope expressed in Psalms 1:1, 6 and 2:12, namely that the way of the wicked (ὁδὸν ἁμαρτωλῶν; Ps 145:9; cf. Ps 1:1) will perish. Psalms 1 and 2 open the Psalter with the hope that through the messiah the wicked rulers will be overcome. Psalm 145 LXX begins the conclusion of the Psalter with praise to the God who accomplishes this. In Acts 4:24-26, the disciples quote both ends of the Psalter in order to put their confidence in this hope.

We see here that Psalm 2 is used for two reasons: 1) to give the reader confidence by reminding him/her that the opposition Jesus faces was predestined by God and expressed beforehand, and 2) to give the reader confidence that God will continue to carry out the mission, warning all nations to submit to him and to the messiah, and then defeating those who do not turn to him.

Before moving on we should address the study of this quotation in W. J. C.

Weren's "Psalm 2 in Luke-Acts." Weren argues that Luke "decisively change[s]" the original meaning of words in Ps 2 to make the text a direct prophecy of the passion of Christ.³⁹

Accordingly, Ps 2 is changed in the following ways: 1) it is no longer just foreign people against the messiah but now Israel; 2) groups ("kings and rulers") are made to be individuals ("Herod and Pontius Pilate"); 3) no action occurs (just planning) in Ps 2, whereas action occurs in Luke-Acts; 4) resistance is against God and the Anointed in Ps 2, but in Luke-Acts it is just against the messiah since God is ultimately behind the opposition; and finally, 5) whereas Herod and Pilate are supposed to be the antagonists according to Luke's reading of Psalm 2, Luke now makes the psalm about the threats of the chief priests and elders.⁴⁰

These "changes" can be explained as follows: 1) The editors of the Psalter saw not just foreigners opposed to the messiah but also Israel. This is clear by the juxtaposition of Psalms 3 and 4 with Psalm 2 and the placement of Psalm 41 at the end of Book I. 2) and 5) The chief priests and elders are considered to be ἄρχοντες that are opposed to Christ throughout Luke-Acts (see 4:8), so Luke is not limiting the psalm to speak of one king and one ruler. 3) It is not really a change to have action occurring. Psalm 2:9 makes it clear that there will be rulers who act against the messiah. 4) While God has predestined the crucifixion, the crucifixion is still an act against God. Weren's analysis, though helpful at points, often fails to acknowledge how closely related Psalm 2 in its original context is to its fulfillment in Luke-Acts.

Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:33

The first part of the sermon focuses on God's provision: beginning with his choice of the patriarchs and providing of descendents (making the people great, v. 17), God

³⁹ Weren, "Psalm 2 in Luke-Acts," 197.

⁴⁰ Weren, "Psalm 2 in Luke-Acts," 197-198.

delivered them and destroyed nations to provide them land as an inheritance. God then provided judges, Samuel, Saul, and David. Finally in verse 23 the greatest provision of all is declared: “Of this man’s offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.” Paul speaks of John the Baptist as a witness beforehand of Jesus’ greatness (13:24-25), and he demonstrates how the message has come to those outside of Jerusalem because of the rejection of Jesus by those in Jerusalem who thereby fulfilled God’s plan (13:26-30). Then in verse 31 Paul declares that there are witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. This brings him to the point of specifying the content of the good news, namely “that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus.” At this point Paul gives three scriptures in support of the message, Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 55:3, and Psalm 16:10. Finally Paul speaks of forgiveness of sins and freedom “from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses,” and he gives a warning from Hab 1:5.

Establishing the function of the Psalm 2 quotation here is difficult because there is disagreement among scholars as to what Paul is doing with the three quotations. Some argue that Luke sees a reference to the resurrection in Psalm 2:7, either that his resurrection “designated or recognized [him] to be the Son of God” (cf. Rom 1:3-4)⁴¹ or that the concept of begetting in Psalm 2:7 is taken to refer directly to Christ’s resurrection.⁴² Others argue that the resurrection is not directly in view in the Psalm 2 quotation but comes only from Psalm 16. Psalm 2, then, is quoted to speak of God’s promise of a messiah in general.⁴³ Among those who

⁴¹ Ben Witherington, III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans / Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 412.

⁴² Evald Lövestam, *Son and Saviour: A Study of Acts 13:32-37* (ConBNT 18; trans. Michael J. Petry; Lund: Gleerup, 1961), 37-48. Possibly also Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 517, though he is not as explicit.

⁴³ Bock, *Proclamation*, 245, 248-249; I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. Beale and Carson), 585; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (NICNT; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 259-260.

make this argument there is a debate about whether ἀνίστημι in verse 33 is a reference to God's bringing Jesus onto the scene or to God's raising Jesus from the dead.

F. F. Bruce argues that because ἀνίστημι is used in Acts 3:22, 26; 7:37 to refer to God bringing Jesus into the world and the synonymous ἐγείρω is used in the same way in 5:20; 13:22, this is the way it is used here.⁴⁴ Similarly, C. K. Barrett argues that ἡμῖν is to be read with ἀναστήσας Ἰησοῦν, so that the sense is that God brought us Jesus, not that God raised him from the dead. Barrett argues that because this is the sense of Ps 2:7 in the baptism narrative it is likely the sense here.⁴⁵ To this we could add the fact that the promise referred to in verse 23 is that the messiah would come, not that he would be resurrected.

Alternatively, many have argued that ἀνίστημι refers to Christ's resurrection here.⁴⁶ It is noteworthy that when ἀνίστημι refers to God bringing Jesus onto the scene, it is either in quotations of Deut 18:15 (Acts 3:22; 7:37) or in Peter proclaiming that God has fulfilled Deut 18:15 (Acts 3:26). Everywhere else that the word is applied to Jesus it speaks of his resurrection (Acts 2:24, 32; 10:41; 17:3, 31; the same can be said of ἐγείρω everywhere it is applied to Jesus: Acts 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30). Furthermore, the word is unambiguously used to refer to resurrection in the very next verse, and resurrection has already been referred to in Acts 13:30.

For some this implies that Luke sees the resurrection in Psalm 2:7. Evald Lövestam argues that this idea emerges specifically from the idea of God "begetting" Jesus,⁴⁷ but

⁴⁴ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 259 n. 79.

⁴⁵ C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, 1998), 1:645-646.

⁴⁶ Marshall, "Acts," 585; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 456; Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 516; Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 359; etc.

⁴⁷ Lövestam, *Son and Saviour*, 43-48.

there are problems with this view. First, nowhere else in the New Testament is Psalm 2 used in support of the resurrection.⁴⁸ Second, nowhere in Second Temple Jewish literature is resurrection described in birthing terms, so it is unlikely that someone would read, “Today I have begotten you,” and think it refers to Jesus’ resurrection.⁴⁹ Third, the expression in verse 34, ὅτι δὲ ἀνέστησεν αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν μηκέτι μέλλοντα ὑποστρέφειν εἰς διαφθοράν, οὕτως εἶρηκεν, suggests that what follows (the upcoming Ps 16 quotation) is the text that supports the resurrection of Jesus, not the preceding Ps 2 quotation. Fourth, as Paul continues to speak of the resurrection in verses 34, 36-37, he uses the language of Ps 16, not Ps 2.⁵⁰ Finally, Luke has earlier shown that the resurrection can be defended from Ps 16 alone (Acts 2:24-32). The addition of two new texts (Ps 2:7 and Isa 55:3) suggests that something more than Jesus’ resurrection is being argued for here and that these two new texts support the new idea that Paul is proclaiming. What, then, is the function of Psalm 2 in Paul’s sermon?

Darrell Bock argues that the three scriptures quoted in Acts 13:33-35 address three components of the good news in Acts 13:32-33: the promise to the Fathers (= Ps 2:7), the fulfillment to their children (= Isa 55:3), and the raising up of Jesus (= Ps 16:10).⁵¹ In this view, then, Luke is not using Ps 2:7 to support the idea of resurrection. Bock also argues that verse 34a should be understood as a parenthetical statement rather than as an introduction to the Isa 55 quote. The parenthetical statement would mean that “the incorruptibility of Jesus [which will be

⁴⁸ The closest one could come to arguing for a direct connection between Psalm 2:7 and resurrection is in Rom 1:3-4, but here Psalm 2 is not quoted and resurrection does not flow from the idea of God begetting Jesus. Instead, Jesus is declared to be the Son of God in power by his resurrection (Bock, *Proclamation*, 247-248).

⁴⁹ *Contra* Lövestam, *Son and Saviour*, 37-38. See Bock’s refutation of Lövestam’s examples in *Proclamation*, 246-248.

⁵⁰ Bock, *Proclamation*, 248.

⁵¹ Bock, *Proclamation*, 244-245.

defended using Ps 16:10 in verse 35] is the ground upon which the promise of Ps. 2:7 can be seen to be fulfilled.”⁵² In other words, because Jesus was resurrected (Ps 16:10), he can fulfill the promise of an everlasting reign (Ps 2:7) with all its blessings extending to the people (Isa 55:3).

Regardless of whether one holds Bock’s view, Barrett and Bruce’s view, or the view that the resurrection declares Jesus to be the Son of God, Psalm 2 functions in the same way. It is a promise that God will bring the messiah. *Paul is using it, then, to show that there is a biblical warrant for what he is proclaiming, or perhaps better: to clarify who this Jesus is whom he is proclaiming.*

More can be said about Psalm 2 in this sermon, though. It is repeatedly highlighted that God had promised a messiah: in verse 23, in verse 25 via John, via the prophets in verse 27, in “all that was written of him” in verse 29, in the promise to the fathers in verse 32, in Psalm 2 (Acts 13:33), in Isa 55 (Acts 13:34), and in the failure of David to fulfill what was promised in Ps 16:10 (Acts 13:37). As we saw in our study of the canonical shape of the Psalter, this is the fundamental hope that is expressed in Psalm 2, and it is one of the main themes of Paul’s sermon. Not only this, but the other components of Psalm 2 are all a part of Paul’s sermon: that the messiah will be unsuccessfully opposed (cf. Acts 13:27-30), that he will be announced to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 13:26, 40-41), and that he will dash the disobedient among the nations into pieces (cf. Acts 13:40-41).

Echoes of Psalm 2 throughout Luke-Acts

This prepares us to see how Psalm 2 is echoed throughout Luke-Acts. The various components of the Psalm are each fundamental elements of Luke’s narrative: that a

⁵² Bock, *Proclamation*, 249.

Davidic descendant/messiah would arise (the decision to keep Ps 2 in the Psalter), that he would be declared by God to be His Son (2:7), that he would be unsuccessfully opposed (2:1ff), and that he would be given the whole world as his inheritance (2:8) – either by victory in battle (2:9) or by peoples freely turning to him (2:10-12). Echoes of each of these themes will now be briefly explored.

1. The Davidic Messiah Is Destined to Come

We have already seen that the Lukan birth narrative emphasizes Jesus' descent from David (Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4, 11; 3:31). This emphasis continues throughout Luke-Acts (Luke 6:3; 18:38-39; 20:41-44; Acts 1:16; 2:23-36; 13:23; 15:16). Luke also emphasizes that everything that happened *had to* happen. It is the decision of the editors of the Psalter to place Psalm 2 at the front of the Psalter that in part led to this. So to some extent we could speak of Psalm 2, as the introduction to the Psalter, being one of the key bases for the divine $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in Luke-Acts. Similarly, the idea that the entire Psalter applies to Christ is rooted in the fact that Jesus is portrayed as the messianic Son of God who is, based on the placement of Psalm 2, the subject of the Psalms. Luke's application of texts like Pss 69 and 109 to Jesus (and through him to Judas) in Acts 1:20 is ultimately rooted in Luke's understanding that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Psalms as a whole, which are introduced with the claim to be messianic.

2. The Messiah Will Be the Son of God

Psalm 2 is also one of the main OT passages for establishing the idea that the messiah would be the Son of God. Luke works throughout his two volumes to show that Jesus is the Son of God. This does not just happen when Jesus is anointed at his baptism but goes back to Jesus' birth (Luke 1:32, 35). Jesus speaks of it when he is twelve years old (2:49) and repeatedly addresses God as "Father" (10:21-22; 22:29, 42; 23:34, 46, 49). In one parable Jesus is depicted as the son/heir of the king (20:13). At one point Luke uses irony to cause the reader to expect people to discover Jesus' status as Son of God (4:22).⁵³ Even Satan (4:3, 9), demons (4:41; 8:28), and the elders, chief priests, and scribes (22:70) acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God. This is also the first expression Paul uses to refer to Jesus (Acts 9:20).

It is not surprising in light of the importance of Psalm 2 for understanding Jewish messianism that some would argue that Psalm 2 had a more creative role in the early Christian tradition. So Gerhard Schneider argues that Luke develops the virgin birth idea based on his reflection on Psalm 2:7 and Jesus' baptism.⁵⁴ But there is really no warrant for postulating such an idea, unless one holds that virgin birth is impossible or that it would be more likely made up than factual – an idea that is foreign to Luke and his high view of God's power and activity in history. Luke-Acts is better read from the assumption that Luke expects of his readers: that God is carrying out what he promised long ago. Seen in such a way we should not conclude that Psalm 2 created elements of Luke's narrative so much as God foretold in Psalm 2 what he would bring about in the fullness of time.

⁵³ Up to this point no one has said anything negative of Jesus. When Luke says, "All spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, 'Is this not the son of . . .?'" he seems to be using irony to get the reader to expect "God" to be the next word. This may even be why the word *ἐστιν* breaks up the expression *υἱὸς Ἰωσήφ*.

⁵⁴ Gerhard Schneider, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (2 vols; ÖTK 3; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1977), 1:52.

Another question that naturally arises in a discussion of Luke's sonship ideology is the divinity of Christ. No one would argue that Jews saw the preexilic Davidic kings as divine, though they too were called "sons of God." Is there any reason that Luke believed Jesus' status as "Son of God" to be any different? Luke's use of the Psalms demonstrates this. When Luke read Psalm 2, he saw Jesus fulfilling the mission of verses 8-9 where David fell short. When Luke read Psalm 16, he saw Jesus fulfilling verse 10 where David fell short. Language that appears to be hyperbolic in Psalms is literal prophecy of the messiah in Luke's mind. In the words of Darrell Bock, "If a regal figure was a son of God, surely the Messiah is Son of God *par excellence*."⁵⁵ One could even suggest that Luke uses various avenues to demonstrate that Jesus is the Son of God: he is the Son because he was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35); he is the Son because of his relationship to David (Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 3:31); he is the Son because the Holy Spirit anointed him as messiah (Luke 3:22); he is the Son because all who are like the Father are "sons of the Most High" (Luke 6:35-36); he is the Son because all who are resurrected are "sons of God" (Luke 20:36); and he is the Son because he sits at God's right hand (Acts 2:33). Again, this may lead one to wonder if Luke is creating these elements to make his point that Jesus fulfills Psalm 2, but a better Lukan question to bring to the data is why did Psalm 2 speak of the king as a Son of God to begin with? With the popularity of the view in the ANE that the king is divine, why would Israel, which is so concerned to guard against this view, speak of its king using the same terminology? The Psalm 2 terminology does not even suggest an adoption of the Davidic king, but a *birth* (נָלַךְ / γεννάω in verse 7; נָסַךְ in verse 6⁵⁶). Perhaps the best explanation, though admittedly unverifiable, is that God intended to typify Jesus when he

⁵⁵ Bock, *Luke*, 1:115.

⁵⁶ For an argument that נָסַךְ refers to creation of the king rather than installation of the king, see Jeffrey H. Tigay, "Divine Creation of the King in Psalms 2:6," in *Eretz-Israel 27* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2003), 246-251. Elsewhere נָסַךְ is translated "pour," "cast," or "found."

initiated the kingship and so He used sonship language. It seems likely that this is the explanation that Luke would give.

3. The Messiah Will Be Unsuccessfully Opposed

Obviously the view expressed in Psalm 2:1-6 – that the messiah would be opposed but that it would all be in vain – runs throughout Luke-Acts. He makes this explicit in the quotation of Ps 2:1-2 in Acts 4:25-26, but one could say that this aspect of Psalm 2 runs right through the narrative. Wherever Luke speaks of the necessity of Jesus' suffering, one could argue that this is an echo of Ps 2.⁵⁷

4. The Messiah Will Possess the Ends of the Earth

Psalm 2 demonstrates in two ways that the messiah will possess the ends of the earth. In verse 9, God promises the messiah that he will break the nations into pieces like a potter's vessel. Verses 10-12 are more positive in their portrait, giving rulers an opportunity to freely serve the Lord and offering blessing to all who will trust (παίθω) in him. Are either of these ideas echoed in Luke-Acts, or does Luke merely make use of verses 1-7? We have already mentioned the likely allusion to Psalm 2:8 in Luke 4:5-6 and the echo of Psalm 2:8 in Acts 1:8. In the latter case it would seem that Luke's understanding of Jesus possessing the ends of the earth is closer to the model in verses 10-12. These verses, however, cannot be separated from verse 9. It is the fact that the messiah will dash the nations to pieces that warrants a call to the kings to be among those blessed (2:12). Even within verses 10-12 is a warning that the Lord's wrath is quickly kindled. This idea can also be seen in Luke-Acts.

⁵⁷ By calling this an echo, I am suggesting that Luke thinks of this historical reality in terms of Psalm 2 and that therefore Psalm 2 affects his presentation of the events. There is no reason to suppose that Luke creates events (such as the account of Jesus before Herod in Luke 23:6-12 [see Martin Dibelius, "Herodes und Pilatus," ZNW 16 (1915): 113-126, and Weren, "Psalm 2 in Luke-Acts," 200-202]) based on Psalm 2. The identification of echoes does not suggest a creative influence so much as Luke discovering a scripture to explain the significance of an event. (For a refutation of Dibelius, see Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1478-1479, and Marion L. Soards, "Tradition, Composition and Theology in Luke's Account of Jesus Before Herod Antipas," *Bib* 66 [1985]: 344-364.)

When John the Baptist speaks of the coming of the messiah, he says, “His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear the threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire” (Luke 3:17). So John the Baptist’s early conception of who the messiah is is one who will make Psalm 1 a reality through the kind of wrath that is expressed in Psalm 2:9, 12. Jesus continues this idea, speaking of how unbearable it will be for those who reject him (Luke 10:11, 14f; 11:29-32; etc.). All who fail to repent will “perish” (ἀπόλλυμι, Luke 13:3, 5; Ps 2:12), and any who do not want him to be king will be slaughtered (Luke 19:27). This message continues through Acts where Peter proclaims that Jesus will judge the living and the dead (Acts 10:42) and warns his hearers to save themselves from this wicked generation (Acts 2:40). Paul, too, warns that Jesus will judge the world on the appointed day (Acts 17:31; cf. 13:40-41; 24:25).⁵⁸

Conclusion

We began by speaking of Psalm 2 as a four-act play: 1) the nations plan to throw off the yoke of the newly anointed Davidic king; 2) God laughs at the inability of their plans to succeed; 3) the king receives the promise that his kingdom will extend to the ends of the earth; 4) the nations are called to submit to God and the Davidic king in order to receive a blessing rather than God’s wrath. We see now that this drama is perfectly fulfilled in Luke and Acts. The themes expressed in Psalm 2 are present and even prevalent throughout Luke-Acts. Luke’s quotations of and allusions to various parts of the psalm suggest that he applied the whole psalm to Christ. In the clearest allusions and quotations we see that Luke uses Psalm 2 in the following ways: 1) to clarify who Jesus is through a foundational messianic text (Luke 3:22; 9:35; Acts 13:33); 2) to reveal the significance of Jesus’ baptism as an anointing for messiahship (Luke

⁵⁸ There may even be an allusion to Psalm 2:12 in Luke 18:8, where Jesus says God will give justice to his elect ἐν τάχει (ESV: “speedily”). Jesus connects this with his return by immediately speaking of the Son of Man returning. In Psalm 2:12, this is the expression used to refer to God’s wrath being quickly kindled.

3:22); 3) to make a case for the superiority of Jesus to Moses and Elijah (Luke 9:35); 4) to give hope in spite of rejection and suffering by showing that this is part of God's plan and will end in glorious victory (Luke 9:35; Acts 4:25-26); and 5) to show that there is a biblical warrant for what is being proclaimed (Acts 13:33). Only the last case really fits Paul Schubert's "proof from prophecy" paradigm,⁵⁹ but Darrell Bock's "proclamation from prophecy and pattern"⁶⁰ seems to be an appropriate umbrella term for all five functions of Luke's use of Psalm 2.

At the same time, Luke's interaction with Psalm 2 goes deeper than the direct quotations and allusions. The entire narrative is influenced by Psalm 2. The fulfillment fits the prediction so well that some would say much of Luke's story was invented to match the expectation. Yet we know from the study of Second Temple Judaism that the first-century expectation was not as close to the fulfillment as it could have been based on clear texts like Psalm 2. It is this discrepancy that Luke exploits. Rather than thinking the Evangelists invented the stories to match the prophecies it seems that the better conclusion is that God invented the prophecies to match the later fulfillment. Psalm 2 was moved to the front of the Psalter by an inspired editor who saw it as the best introductory expression of the messianic expectation. Luke recognized the significance of this in relation to who Jesus turned out to be, how the nations raged, how their plan came to emptiness, how the kingdom of Christ is extending to the ends of the earth, and how the nations are now being called to submit to God and the king before the king returns bearing God's wrath. Psalm 2 gave a high expectation that no preexilic Davidic king could fulfill, but Jesus fulfilled it, and so Luke demonstrates that "everything written about [the messiah] in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms [was] fulfilled" in Christ.

Thanks be to God.

⁵⁹ See Paul Schubert, "The Structure and Significance of Luke 24," in *Neutestamentlichen Studien für Rudolph Bultmann* (ed. W. Eltester; Berlin: Alfred Töpelman, 1954), 165-186.

⁶⁰ Bock, *Proclamation*.

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