

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

[Number 38](#)

“ACTS 2:22-41”

Dr. Michael S. Heiser

With

**Residential Layman
Trey Stricklin**

February 27, 2015

Acts 2:22-41

This episode will focus on two items of biblical theology that are controversial in biblical study:

How the New Testament writers / apostles quoted the Old Testament

The meaning of Acts 2:38

Of the two, the second is more familiar to Christians due to denominational debates about baptism. Acts 2:38 needs to be interpreted in light of the new covenant context that Luke has been framing since early in Chapter 1 and that we've been talking about in the preceding episodes.

The first issue is less known because many Bible readers never bother to compare what they read in the New Testament to the Old Testament, even when Old Testament passages are being quoted. Neglecting this simple exercise stunts one's understanding of biblical theology, and leads to interpretations that are often out of context and idiosyncratic.

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 38, Acts 2:22-41. I am your residential layman, Trey Stricklin and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike. How are you?

MSH: Good. How are you?

TS: I'm doing pretty good. Cold, but doing good.

MSH: Yeah, well, I'm just glad to be home. I spent two weeks traveling on the road. I'm just thinking, boy, I can't wait to feel like me again. I like routine.

TS: I hear you. Well I guess we're going to continue on with Acts 2?

MSH: Yes we are. Acts 2 and we'll start in verse 22 and we'll go through verse 41, and, again, just pick out a few things for discussion. So for listeners, if you have your Bible handy, if not, that's fine. I'm going to read through the text again. If you have it, we're going opening to Acts 2:22, which reads,

²²“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

MSH: I'll stop there. That's verses 22 and 23. Of course, we're continuing on in Peter's sermon in Acts 2 after the Spirit is come, and, again, all the events of Pentecost that we're used to hearing. That's probably fresh in most of the listener's minds. And this section of Peter's sermon, what he's going to do is to get into the Old Testament. So today, what we're going to look at is how Peter uses the Old Testament. It's not quite what you'd expect. And then also touch on the controversial verse Acts 2:38. But here in these first two verses, you'll notice in verse 23, I just want to a quick observation and then move on to Peter's use of the Old Testament. Peter says 'this Jesus delivered up according to definite plan and foreknowledge of God you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men'. The point that I want you to sort pick out here is that we have something known by God, since this is going to happen, a definite plan and foreknowledge of God, so we know, again, from lots of other passages that the linchpin to God's plan to really kick-starting the Kingdom of God on earth, again, and having it run as planned, really having it overcome the deficiencies of the old covenant, the Sinai covenant, because there was so much disobedience to that, so much idolatry, and, frankly, no one can keep the whole law. Even the Kings were apostate. So this whole initial approach, the Sinai approach, just hadn't worked and wasn't going to work. And so God needed a way to both overcome those deficiencies and also, all the way back, again, to the original plight of humanity, being sinners, all of us being sinners, and there being no variability to that. Of course, the linchpin for that was the death of the Messiah and, of course, the resurrection. And this is a plan. Again, we know that this is going to happen, or this is what God intends. And so there's this element of

foreknowledge. There's this element of planning but, nevertheless, verse 23, Peter holds the people who perform these acts accountable. You crucified and killed this man, Jesus, by the hands of lawless men. You're lawless. You're accountable. Now, again, in my mind, again, for those who've read in much of my divine counsel stuff, this is sort of in the same bag, the same category as the incident in 1 Kings 22 verses 19 to 23, with Ahab, except in that instance, we don't have human beings that participate in carrying out something decreed or planned by God. We have divine beings. It's a divine counsel scene. If you remember, Ahab's death was decreed. It's time for Ahab to die. God makes that clear then he looks at the members of his heavenly host, the spiritual beings, and says, okay, how are we to do that? And one spirit comes forward and says, hey, I'll make his prophets lie. I'll be a lying spirit in the mouth of his profits. And God, more or less, says, yeah, that'll work. So you have this participatory element. Now in Peter's case, negatively, the Jewish audience to whom Peter's preaching are the participants. They are willing participants. They weren't forced to turn to Jesus over to Pilate. They weren't forced to do any of these things that lead to the crucifixion. They were willing and so, they act lawlessly. They're accountable. Those who believed, the Jews who believed in the end were very few, if you think about it. They're essentially the 120 that are gathered at the beginning of the book of Acts. And the rest, though, are accountable for deciding the process by which the decree of God was carried out. So you have this notion, once again, of God deciding to do something or planning to do something, and yet, there's this free will. There's this participatory element to it, which is why we get the language we do in verse 23. But right after saying that, Peter says in verse 24, we'll pick up here in Acts 2,

²⁴ God raised him up, [MSH: speaking of Jesus] loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning him, [MSH: that's verse 25, notice David is not speaking about himself. We'll get to why I'm mentioning that in a moment....and him, of course, is Jesus, the Messiah,]

“I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
my flesh also will dwell in hope.
²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One see corruption.
²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

MSH: End of quote. That's Verses 25 through 28, Peter is quoting Psalm 16 there, verses 8 through 11 in the Masoretic text. In the Septuagint, it's actually Psalm 15:8-11. Luke is using the Septuagint like most often happens in the New Testament when New Testament writers and speakers quote the Old Testament, the Septuagint is in view. There are some differences between the Septuagint and Masoretic text, but to be honest, the heart of the matter doesn't really depend on Peter or Luke using the Septuagint. What we want to get into is how Peter is

reading Psalm 16. There are some interpretive observations and issues that we can sort of highlight right up front. The common view that you'll pick up in a lot of commentaries; especially a lot of non-academic commentaries, homiletical commentaries for instance, devotional commentaries, the common view is that David is speaking as the Messiah, as though he is the Messiah, sort of he's putting himself in this messianic role. And the reason why people often gravitate that position, which sounds a little odd, especially when we just read in verse 25, David says concerning him. It reads very clear that he is not speaking of himself. The reason why many commentators sort of try to fuse David and the Messiah in Psalm 16 is because they want, they feel they have to justify the way Peter uses the passage, the way he quotes it. Because Peter quotes it as though it's talking about Jesus, so some commentators think, well, we have to find some way to make Jesus and the psalmist, who is David, the same, or else Peter's just sort of misusing the passage. Again their a little concerned by that and so, they opt for this, in in my view, of sort of awkward approach to the passage. Now let's think about this a little bit. Let's think about Psalm 16 because, again, it is a little odd, so therefore, I must have something better and I think I do, but let's just start this way. It's a little hard to track through, again, if you're following on your Bible, that's the best way to do this. If you're not, you can go back and re-listen to this as you do. If you go to Psalm 16, let's talk about what the original meaning of the Psalm, the Old Testament passage is, at least, what seems to be clear. And, again, you know if I say it that way, that I'm going to, at some point, say what seems to be clear is not quite what's going on. In Acts 2 with what Peter does, and I am going to say that. But let's just start with what seems to be transparently clear. Psalms 16, you have David speaking of Yahweh, the divine name is there in verse 8. I saw the Lord always before me. The Lord there is Yahweh, so the psalmist is speaking about Yahweh. That seems perfectly clear. The context of the Psalm, of course, if you go back to verse 1, it's a prayer to God for help. That's pretty clear it seems. Yahweh is at David's right-hand. If you go back, I saw the Lord always before me for he is at my right hand that may not be shaken. The reason for that language is that's the place where in Semitic culture a helper would be, someone at your right hand. So the prayer is that Yahweh God will help the psalmist, David in this case. Fourth, David is confident that God will not abandon his soul, again, his inner being we'll just say, to Sheol or the grave, nor will God allow him to see the pit or destruction, abstractly, again, you take a word like pit and usually. I shouldn't use usually, often is probably better word to say. It often means to some sort of destruction. It's kind of a metaphor for a bad ending or something like that, something bad happening to you. Now either you take those thoughts, again, psalmist is speaking about Yahweh. It's a prayer to Yahweh for help. Yahweh's at the right hand ready to help and David's confident he's going to get that help. He won't die. He won't get sent to Sheol. If he does die, he won't still be there or something like that. He's expecting some sort of help. Now that either expresses confidence of an earthly deliverance, the context of Psalm might've more specifically been David was in trouble, maybe running from Saul or something like that. So it either expresses his confidence that God can he get him out of this jam that would otherwise probably result in his death, or that, if he did die, he would not remain in Sheol. So the language of the Psalm really refers to one or the other of those things. Now, what we're not talking about here is David is not thinking some thought like he'll never die, like he's going to get raptured, or something or whatever the language people might want to use of that idea is. That is not in view. There's really nothing in the Old Testament that voices the idea that believers will never die, never suffer physical death. There are a couple in the New Testament that you could read that way, but in the Old Testament, that's not really

going to be in view. It's often argued that in Old Testament thinking, in Hebrew thinking, that passages like this, about not remaining in Sheol, only refer to deliverance from some physical threat, from physical death, and, therefore, since Peter is not talking about, Peter's talking about resurrection. The idea is that the Septuagint is what you need to quote to get resurrection or eternal life, to get deliverance from death and the afterlife. You'll usually hear this in books or websites or whatever they talk about Hebrew thought versus Greek thought, and frankly, I think that that whole dichotomy is fairly bogus. Hebrew can express things that Greeks thought and Greeks can express things that Hebrews thought. I think this is a false dichotomy even though you'll see it a lot. That's not to say that their ideas of afterlife and cosmology were always the same. They weren't, but this notion that, I have this thought here in Hebrew and that can't be expressed in Greek and then vice versa, it is largely bogus. Now Sheol, let's think about this. Sheol is the word for grave in the Old Testament. It's also the word for the realm of the dead. In 1 Samuel 28:13, when the medium in Endor succeeds in contacting Samuel, Samuel comes up out of the ground. The woman says I see an elohim coming up out of the ground, and it's Samuel. And Samuel and Saul have a conversation where Samuel reiterates revelation that he'd gotten from God himself earlier, when he was still living in an earthly sense. The place that he comes from, again, this conception, this thing in the ground, this holding tank, this realm of the dead, this underworld, the Hebrew term for that is Sheol, but it's also the grave. And it makes sense because when people died, you put them in the ground. The idea was that their body may stay here but their inner-being goes to the realm of the dead. Again, it's just afterlife talk, afterlife terminology. Sheol, since it involved either the grave, the physical grave, or the underworld, was conceived of as being forever. There's never going to be some point where the life in the underworld ends. So it was the hope of the righteous person that this afterlife in the realm of the dead would somehow someday be interrupted by God, and God would take you from the realm of the dead to be in his direct presence. And that's actually how Psalm 16 ends, the idea of being in the presence of God forever. You can go to other Psalms that expressed the same sort of idea. You've got Psalm 41:12, which says, 'you have upheld me because of my integrity and set me in your presence forever.' Again, there's this notion, if you go back and read that whole Psalm, of deliverance, being with the presence of God forever. God's throne room is not Sheol. Sheol is the realm of the dead. So the Old Testament person, Old Testament people, did have this hope of an everlasting afterlife in the presence of God, that they would be removed from the realm of the dead. Psalm 49 says the same thing, verses 13 to 15,

¹³ This is the path of those who have foolish confidence;
yet after them people approve of their boasts. Selah

¹⁴ Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol;
death shall be their shepherd,

and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. **[MSH: Well that's a curious phrase if the Old Testament doesn't have the idea of a positive everlasting afterlife. That's an idea that critics commonly bring up, like this was unknown in the Old Testament. It's not true.]**

Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell.

¹⁵ But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol,
for he will receive me.

MSH: Again, there's this afterlife hope, the hope that at some point the righteous will escape Sheol. You don't get the real precise details of the afterlife that you get in the New Testament. You don't get those in the old, but you do get this hope. Now, let's take this back to Acts 2. What's Peter thinking when he quotes this passage in Acts 2, and you know he's thinking about Jesus who they have seen resurrected, so what's he doing here? How can he make this about Jesus when the Psalm is clearly referencing God and referring to himself? How does this work? What's Peter doing? What is he doing? Is this an illegitimate thing to make the verses in Psalm 16 say? I don't think it's illegitimate at all. I'll try to explain it. Now, it's typical that the Old Testament Psalm 16 is interpreted so that David is speaking as the Messiah. We already said that you're going to find that in commentaries, again, because we need to justify the way that Peter is doing things. But I think what Peter is thinking in Acts 2:25-28, when he quotes Psalm 16:8-11, that that's made a little clearer for us when we read what Peter says in the next few verses. So, here's what he says right after the quote in verses 29 to 32. He says,

²⁹ “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, [**MSH: or, again, the *Christós*, the Messiah**] that he was not abandoned to Hades, [**MSH: again, to the underworld**] nor did his flesh see corruption.³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

MSH: Now look at what Peter does. He proceeds from the obvious facts. First, David did die. He's dead. He's still dead. Okay in verse 29, he says that point-blank. David died and was buried and his tomb is still here today. Number 2, David but of course knew about the covenant God had made with him, what we call the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7. It's also repeated in Psalm 89. He knew that God had made a covenant with him, that his dynasty would be ultimate. In other words, at some point his dynasty would have unending rule. That was the promise. God had sworn to him that this to be the case. Now Peter's words in these verses, again, just going back here, 'being therefore prophet knowing that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne', that's an allusion to Psalm 132:11-12. I'm reading that Psalm now, Psalm 132:11-12,

¹¹ The LORD swore to David a sure oath
from which he will not turn back:

“One of the sons of your body
I will set on your throne.

¹² If your sons keep my covenant
and my testimonies that I shall teach them,
their sons also forever
shall sit on your throne.”

MSH: So this is an allusion to that Psalm. So Peter's thinking, okay, David's dead. We know that, but there was this promise that a descendent of David someday would end up on the throne, would end up ruling and it would be forever. So consequently, what Peter was thinking it comes down to one of two possibilities. Peter possibly sees Psalm 16 not as David speaking about himself, asking God for help, but as one of David's descendants, speaking to God for help. For Peter in this view, David was sort of mouthing a prayer that would come from one of his descendants. In verse 30 Acts 2, Peter refers to David as a prophet. In 2 Samuel 23:1- 2, we have David essentially affirming that idea.

The oracle of David, the son of Jesse,
the oracle of the man who was raised on high,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the sweet psalmist of Israel:

²“The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me;

MSH: Again, this is the last words of David, but David had this sense, again, he had the prophetic gift. Now Peter could look at it that way because David, again, was dead, and he didn't rise in three days. So Peter could look at the Psalm and say look, David, the psalmist, was sort of mouthing a prayer that someday, this ultimate descendent would pray. That's one possibility. The second possibility is that Peter thinks that David is talking about himself in Psalm 16. That's the most obvious reading just going from the Old Testament. But that the Lord who is a David's right-hand is not Yahweh, even the divine name is there, but is in fact the Messiah. Now that would mean Peter thought the Messiah was Yahweh in the flesh, which, of course, other New Testament passages would make clear, that he did believe that. Now think about it. The effect of this approach is that Peter looks at the Psalm and reads it as saying that David was expressing hope that the Messiah, who is Yahweh, and David uses the word Yahweh, but he's thinking about the Messiah who is Yahweh, David is expressing the hope that his ultimate successor, the Messiah, would one day remove him from Sheol. In other words, while the Psalm appears to have David saying you, God, will not let me die, Peter reads it as saying you, my son Yahweh, the Messiah, will not let me remain dead in the realm of the dead once I've died. In that reading the psalmist hopes that once dead, he will not be left in death, the realm of the dead, permanently, his body permanently suffering corruption and decay. So if we read it that way, Peter is essentially making a theological reading of the text. He's not altering the text, but his reading is based on the belief that Yahweh in the text is the second Yahweh, that I talk about a lot my divine counsel stuff, the embodied Yahweh, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who was Yahweh incarnate. And so, when he's thinking of the resurrection as they're standing there at Pentecost in Acts 2, and he's saying, look, we were all witnesses that this descendent of David, who is Yahweh incarnate, and that David in Psalm 16 is actually talking about this guy. He rose from the dead, and because he rose from the dead, this is what the song means, that David was looking forward to a time as a prophet, when something would happen that would ultimately trigger, or be the cause of, his own deliverance from death, ultimately, that he would not stay in the realm of the dead. He would be in the presence of God, that this was sort of, again, the trigger event. Now, again, why do I go through all that? There's really two reasons why I do it.

One is, and I don't know how many times I've heard this, this whole thing about we need to interpret prophecy "literally". Well, what I just went through is not a literal reading of the text. It's a theological reading. Now, it's also theologically real. We need to be able to distinguish some ideas here when we think about prophetic talk, prophecy, end times, whatever. An other than literal reading does not mean that you're saying I don't believe that what I'm reading is real. That's often the way Christians take symbolic interpretation or typological interpretation or allegorical interpretation. They say, well, you're resorting to that because you just don't want to affirm what's happening in the text is real and true. You're trying to get away from it. You're trying to allegorize something so that you don't have to struggle with the literal reality of the text. That is very misguided thinking. Other methods of interpretation, they may not be literal but the results of them are just as real as a literal interpretation. There just real in a different way, and, frankly, when you have more than literal interpretation, more than literal fulfillments, if you really believe in a supernatural world, those things are actually more real in a certain way than things that happen now, things that happen in our own experience, our own embodied experience, the things that we can process and understand. You can have different kinds of fulfillment is the point. And none of them means that you're trying to make something not real. It's just real in a different way. It's approached in a different way. We're going to see this as we go through Acts, that a number of occasions, the New Testament writers do not just strike one-for-one correspondences between a verse they read in the Old Testament and how they see it playing out in their own lifetimes. There's a certain amount of elasticity between Old Testament passages and the way the New Testament uses them. And I want you to get that in your head so that you not just stuck on this, frankly, simplistic literalism idea. There's a lot more to it than that. And this is, I think, a good illustration. You have to really read it in a certain way to make sense of what Peter is doing with this passage. A second reason I bring this up is I wanted you to notice how subtly Peter and his use of this passage, Psalm 16, how subtly he interchanges and equates the divine name with Jesus. That is a pattern in how New Testament authors quote and utilize the Old Testament. They regularly presume Jesus and Yahweh are interchangeable. Now I mention that because, again, I'm well aware that you have these oneness arguments out there, and Unitarian this and that, Jehovah's Witnesses this and that, trying to, again, drive this wedge between Jesus and Yahweh of the Old Testament. That is not what happens in the New Testament. And you don't really have to look for proof texts, even though those things do exist. If you just look at how New Testament writers use the Old Testament and quote it, and interchange Yahweh with Jesus, that will theologically tell you all you need to know. These equations are not contrived. They are everywhere, especially when we look intelligently at how the Old Testament is being quoted. Let's jump back in Acts 2. We have here in verse 33, continuing on, Peter says,

³³ **[MSH: speaking of Jesus]** Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, **[MSH: this is verse 33]** and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. **[MSH: all these languages and stuff, these people aren't drunk. It's the Spirit being poured out in fulfillment of Old Testament prophesy. Then in verse 34 he says]** ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.”

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

MSH: Now, this is drawn from Psalm 110. Now if David is the speaker, there only two parties that are going to be above David in authority, God and the Messiah. So the first Lord here, the Lord said to my Lord, the first Lord there is God. It's the divine name. And the second is the Messiah, because they're both Lord of David. They're both over him. David has God speaking to, again, David's other superior, the Messiah, and he reads the Psalm, what we just talked about, in the same light. The thing that we should take away from this is verse 36 and its easy gloss right over it. 'Let all the house of Israel therefore know'. We see, once again, that the events of Acts 2 presume the return, the presence of all the tribes, all the house of Israel. That harkens back to earlier episodes on the podcast about the new covenant being fulfilled, at least in part, in the church and in the events in Acts 2, and the rest of the book of Acts. The Old Testament promises of a return of the tribes is not merely something in the remote future. When it was written down, they're not thinking of 1948, okay, the establishment of Israel. They're not thinking that. It could be part of an ultimate fulfillment, but in the immediate context, these promises are enacted. They are put in motion. They are being fulfilled in Acts 2 and the rest of the book of Acts, and the rest of the early church. We're back again into that immediate and yet future, already but not yet, paradigm that really drives prophecy. Now the second thing that we want to get into today is found in verse 37. We'll return to verse 37 through verse 41, and that will be the extent of what we cover today. And we'll focus on Acts 2:38. So if you're reading in verse 37,

³⁷ Now when they heard this [**MSH: The Jews listening to what Peter's saying in his sermon**] they were cut to the heart, [**MSH: well, they ought to be**] and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹ So those who received his word [**MSH: They listened to it and believed it**] were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

MSH: Now, the controversial verse, of course, is 2:38, 'repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins'. That's usually where it

ends. We forget this but what follows, 'and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit', that's important. That last part is important. The gift of the Holy Spirit, as we've seen in earlier episodes, is inextricably tied to the commencement of the kingdom of God. John's baptism is the precedent for it. He preached the Kingdom of God and the need for repentance, passages like Mark 1:4, Matthew 3:2, Matthew 4:17. He preached in the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent, very plain from what John was cast in the New Testament. It's unmistakable. This baptism, John's baptism, would give way to being baptized with the Spirit. Remember Acts 1:5 where the podcast started? Acts 1:5, we have here 'John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'. Again, the one baptism supersedes the other, but that doesn't mean that water baptism is done away with. We see it practiced plenty of times in the book of Acts. Consequently, the command to repent and be baptized with the result that you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and, of course, be forgiven, all of that has several contexts that we've been through before in previous episodes. Here they are. I'll just list them. There's five of them. One, John's water baptism done in response to repentance about embracing the Kingdom of God that he preached is, again, a key element. It's a key context. Peter wants people to believe that Jesus was both Lord and Christ as he says. He wants them to believe that the king of this kingdom, and the Kingdom itself, has come. So there's a connection there. The Spirit is received when people repent, when they turn from serving other gods or believing something else. They turn and they embrace the Kingdom of God. The Spirit is received when people repent, when they turn and they believe. Second, the baptism of the Spirit prophesied in Acts 1:5, again, supersedes John's water baptism in some sense. Third, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was upon those who already believed. The 120 in the room, they're already believers. So the Spirit, again, has some connection to a state of believing the truth that God wants you to believe. Forth, the new covenant promise of the Spirit we've looked at in earlier episodes also dealt with a new heart, if you remember, which came, not as a result of being indwelt with the Spirit, it did come as a result of being indwelt by the Spirit but also the language of having a new Spirit within, a changed heart, had some connection to the coming of the Spirit and, again, being in people. So new heart idea. Lastly, the promise of the Holy Spirit with the new covenant was also accompanied by references to being sprinkled with water, if you remember that. That water pictured forgiveness in tandem with having a new heart. Ezekiel 36, we're not going to spend the time in this episode to read that again. We've done it a couple times. It can't be literalized since water is physical but the uncleanness in Ezekiel 36 was spiritual. They were matters of the heart. It's not a literal washing in view, in terms of the effect. A new heart isn't achieved by physical water. These are metaphors. They're symbols. Old Testament priests, for example, would wash to symbolize spiritual cleanness. Their washings didn't produce spiritual cleanness, but again, it was part of a ritual they would go through to prepare themselves for entrance on holy ground, sacred ground. Now given these points, we can say the following about Acts 2:38. The interpretation is not only about water baptism. The passage is not just about water baptism. It involves water as a symbol of cleansing though, but it's not just about water baptism. It's also not just about Spirit baptism, since verse 41 in Acts 2 has people being baptized with water. So it's not just about Spirit baptism either. But it involves the Spirit. It's connected to the presence of the Spirit in some way. And third, the baptism in question presumes repentance, that is, the repentance precedes the baptism. We can also surmise that repentance and baptism probably show up elsewhere in Acts. They do, we'll hit that moment. But all of this helps us decide from among more technical grammatical options related to the phrase, for the remission of sins, it

helps us decide what the world is being talked about and what's not being talked about. So if you're look in commentaries, you'll see things like, well, that little preposition for, repent to baptized for the remission of sins, that little preposition for, in the Greek its *εἰς*, epsilon iota sigma. That little preposition should be thought of as causal. In other words, you translate it something like, repent and be baptized because of the forgiveness of sins, because you've already been forgiven. Now that helps to distinguish between baptism and, again, salvation and forgiveness and having the Holy Spirit, that is true. But a lot of grammarians have pointed out problems with that option in terms of the way the language works. If you're into Greek, you can read Dan Wallace's section on this, and he'll point out, again, some weaknesses to this. Other options are purpose or result, repent and be baptized in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins, or repent and be baptized with the result that you're forgiven. Again, the basic problem with these views is that repentance alone doesn't result in forgiveness. You would need the act of baptism. It would make the act of baptism somehow part of salvation. Now the problem with that, of course, is that faith is ignored in that entire equation. And there are lots of other passages that talk about salvation being by faith. Faith and repentance are working hand-in-hand, and that don't mention baptism at all. These options, purpose or result, really creates not only theological problems with the rest of the New Testament, but it butts heads with other verses that exclude baptism when talking about salvation but do include repentance and faith. So it just doesn't work. So what we need is a way to honor all the context we talked about, without violating the clear teaching about the relationship of faith and repentance to salvation in those other passages. I want to consider Acts 10-11 as a model here. Of course we're nowhere near that, but if you recall in Acts 10-11 is the story of Peter with Cornelius the Gentile, about the gospel going to the Gentiles. In Acts 11:15-16, Cornelius and others were converted. Peter preaches to them. They believe the gospel. And at the point of their conversion, they were baptized, the text says, by the Holy Spirit. After the Spirit baptism, Peter says, 'surely no one can refuse the water for those to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit'. They already have new hearts. They already have the promised Spirit connected with the new covenant. Those things are prior to Peter saying, hey, it's time to water baptize them now. They're already believers. Water baptism didn't produce the salvation for Cornelius and others and a bunch of other examples in the New Testament. It is a testimonial to the earlier Spirit baptism. Now taking us to Acts 2, Peter's command that people repent and then be baptized, to be expressed this way, and with this one we're going to close. Peter would be saying, repent, which will result in being Spirit baptized, and then be baptized, illustrating that you are now clean. You've been forgiven. Going beyond this gets into the conceptual relationship of baptism to circumcision, something I blogged at length about on the Naked Bible. We can perhaps hit that in a Q&A later on.

TS: Good deal Mike. I have an interesting, I find it fascinating, because we're in Acts 2, and I find it very fascinating that verse 30 where it talks about Jesus being a descendent of King David. Well, that's really where the Jews draw the line the sand saying Jesus is not the Messiah because of his supernatural birth.

MSH: That would presume, it presumes a couple things. If according to, let's just go back to the Old Testament. The Davidic Covenant, and especially the new covenant, why does God want even have these sorts of covenants, and why would they be in effect, given Israel's apostasy, and

also, sort of the condition of Israel in modern times, again, lacking a messiah, lacking a throne, lacking that this sort of thing? So sure, they expect the Messiah to come back and be the ultimate son of David. But do they then not expect that Messiah to be divine, or to be God? Now they may deny that but here's the whole point, especially the new covenant. None of these people, the king included, David's descendants included, and it gets so bad in Psalm 89, the psalmist says in verses 38-39, hey, has the covenant been annulled? It gets so bad. So the whole point of the new covenant especially, the new companies is the key to making your other covenants possible, the Sinai Covenant, Abraham Covenant, Davidic Covenant, and all that, why? Because for a human being to obey the terms of all these covenants, it cannot be done. That person who fulfills the terms of all these covenants perfectly has to be God. Again, they might want to resist that conclusion but this is why the Messiah is cast not only in the Old Testament but also in literature between the Testaments as divine. You need somebody who is more than a man to fix the brokenness of the preceding covenants and the exile and all that stuff. You have to have it. And so, by their own argument then, if we have a divine Messiah, how can you produce a divine Messiah through a purely physical birth? That would be the question. So the question that they put the Christians, they really need to put to themselves. That's issue number one. Issue number two, of course, it presumes that both genealogies are the genealogies of Joseph. That is the majority view, but there are others who have argued that one of the genealogies is that of Mary, because he has to have a physical descendant because he is born of a woman, and his own genealogies, of course, go back through David, through Abraham, back to Adam as well. So it presumes that there is no genealogical link that's for real, that's a presumption. It's not a fact. It's a presumption. The other issue that it presumes is, in all this talk about, again, Messiahship and divinity and all the sort of stuff, and, again, with the genealogies... Repeat your question again to me.

TS: Well I just find it fascinating that the Jews don't believe Jesus is the Messiah because he's born of a virgin birth

MSH: The third presumption would be that Joseph's genealogies have to be literal. And I realize that some of these presumptions, they don't all necessarily work well together, but there are three separate presumptions. And that is, it's often argued, both in terms of Gentile scholars and even some Jewish scholars, that the point of the genealogies here is to establish, to link Jesus back to Joseph's to legitimize, again, his ruling status within the line of David, and that if Joseph adopted Jesus as his son, and that was sufficient, and the analogy for that in the Old Testament, that you can have God look at a person and consider that person to be a legitimate heir, is something like Solomon. There's adoption language in the line of the kings, where it'll say something like, you know, this day you are my son or something like that, where God speaks to Solomon. So there is this sense that even though we have this sort of disconnect, at least apparent if not an imagined disconnect with this perceived disconnect, that legal standing, even if it's adoptive situation, would have been viewed sufficient to establish the legal claim to a throne, in other words, a particular status that would have been sufficient, even if adoption was involved. So there are actually three issues there that have to be examined. Is it really an argument against your own view? That's number one. Number two, you know, what about the possibility of a genealogy involving Mary? And the third one, what about just legal status being the issue as far as a claim to the throne goes? So all those things are kind of hot and heavy

discussions within New Testament studies, and the fact that they are still discussions shows you, quite apparently, that there are really good arguments in any one of those trajectories that would address that particular question. Of course, the Jewish community doesn't want to have those arguments, doesn't want to acknowledge that they could be wrong there because there's so much at stake

TS: Well, I know there's so much information really here about baptism, and I encourage all of our listeners to go back and listen to the first 10 episodes because Mike talks specifically about baptism. And I believe episode number 10 he directly talks about Acts 2 verse 38, so you might want to go back and listen to the first 10 episodes of the naked Bible podcast to get a more in depth discussion because I know we could sit here for four hours and talk about just baptism and circumcision alone, and how that all relates. So, is there anything else that you would like to add?

MSH: I think we're close to wrapping up Acts 2, and we also want to have a Q&A so maybe you can tell listeners what the plans are there.

TS: I think next week we're going to wrap up Acts 2 and then the week after that, so two weeks from now, we're going to have our first Q&A episode. We've already gotten some questions that are in, so please e-mail me or Mike. We're going to do a whole show on Mike just answering your questions. So please send those in

MSH: I was going to say I add one more thing. The last section in Acts 2 verses 40 to 47, this is the passage about having all things in common. So one of the things we'll be talking about is, hey, is this a passage that justifies a modern political system like communism or even a lesser one, one without teeth, socialism. So we'll be getting into some of the so-called social justice material by way or by means of this last section in Acts chapter 2

TS: Are we going to be talking about baptism in the other chapters in the future or is it contained here?

MSH: I think when we hit the passage, I think it's Acts 8 or 9 I think, where Paul meets, no it will be later than that, where Paul meets some followers who had only known the baptism of John, where he has to give them the Gospel and then he baptized them, we'll discuss it a little bit more there. Because that's an unusual episode that we need to tie back into this and, you know, the broader context of baptism

TS: I really think baptism seems to be a big topic within Christianity and the mode of baptism and everything thereafter. I know it's a big issue down here south is just the mode of baptism alone seems to be a hot topic within the Christian community

MSH: You get in Acts 16, Acts 19 is the one I was just thinking about but you know the Philippine jailer thing, and then the other disciples that Paul meets who knew only the preaching of John. I think at least in those two texts, we'll probably camp a little bit on baptism

TS: I really urged listeners to go back and listen to the first ten episodes of baptism alone if you get some more in depth or just get up to speed as we go into these topics again. Anything else, Mike, that you would like to add?

MSH: No that's it.