

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

Number 40

["Q&A"](#)

Dr. Michael S. Heiser

With

**Residential Layman
Trey Stricklin**

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Our first Question and Answer episode!

Here is the paper referenced in the show:

**GOD'S PLAN AND GOD'S POWER: ISAIAH 66 AND THE RESTRAINING
FACTORS OF 2 THESS 2:6-7**

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 40, our very first question and answer episode. I'm your residential layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are youi doing?

MSH: Pretty good. How are you, again, Trey?

TS: I'm doing good. I'm excited for our first experimental Q&A episode.

MSH: Yeah, we'll just have to see how it goes and hopefully it'll encourage people to ask questions.

TS: Absolutely. Well, do you just want to jump into, we got a whopping four questions here.

MSH: Yeah, go ahead and give me the questions.

TS: For the sake of time, we better go ahead and get right into it. So, question number one is referencing episode 37, and it's by Robert. And he wants you go into detail about the meaning of Acts 2 verse 4, "and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit". He wants to know who is the speaker referencing when it says "and they were all filled". Could this be a reference to only the 12 apostles? Also, were they speaking with tongues? With a wind at the time of the giving of the Holy Spirit, everyone was inside. Did that come outside and start preaching in tongues, etc.? So maybe you could elaborate for Robert on...

MSH: Well, a generalization would be, being filled with the Holy Spirit would be of sort of being both empowered, and I would also define it as being submitted to God's will. Now, in the context of Acts 2, I think the first of those is really more of what's in view. I don't see any exegetical justification for restricting the description there, the language, to just twelve. The 120, our first mention in Acts 1:15, and if you read that, that number included the 11 because they were needing to replace Judas, and then they selected Judas' replacement from among the others there, the 120, using the criteria that we talked about in the previous episode and in Acts 1:21-22, and so Acts 1 ends with the 120 present in the scene. And, of course, the 12 were the newly reconstituted 12 are among them. And then it jumps right into Acts 2. It says, 'they were all together in one place.'

So that's all you get. You don't get any further indication of the 12 being singled out, either by some descriptive language or any listing. And so, I don't think we have any reason to suspect that it was only the 12 that are empowered with the Spirit, again, to speak these languages. So, if you think about the logistics of it, you do need more than one person speaking a given language to really penetrate or infiltrate the masses at Pentecost. The result of that is 3000 people embracing the message of Jesus as Messiah. Obviously, that's going to be a fraction of the people that are there. And so, how do you do that with only told people? I think the more logical reading, and certainly there's nothing in the text that violates this or impedes it, is that all of them were empowered by the Spirit to do this. So that's how I would have to address the first part of that. The whole thing about coming outside, if people aren't familiar with the text, let me just read the first few verses of Acts 2. It says,

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.
² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

MSH: And then it goes into the description of other people hearing them speak in their own language. So the assumption would have to be, I would think, that when the spirit event happened, they would have gone outside and, again, this would've been the evidence of what the whole point of the Spirit's visit was, again, to impart the message of the Messiah to these various people groups that are mentioned there in Acts chapter 2. So there would be no need for them to be talking another language among each other because they're already believers. And so, again, the implication is that they leave the house and they go and start talking people. Biblical scenes of events frequently do not give point by point or point to point detail. In fact, I think you'd be hard-pressed to find one that really really does. Even itineraries, like for Old Testament Israel, if you compare, for instance, Numbers 33, which is the itinerary of going from Egypt to Sinai and so on and so forth, there are differences between that itinerary and some of the other things you read in other parts of the Torah.

And so a lot of these things I think, basically, all such descriptions of events like this are selective. And I can only say personally, having written fiction, again, that's my only analogy for this, having written that sort of detail, again, he stood up. He turned left. He looked at the person 3 feet from the door. That kind of level of detail is not necessary for creating or re-creating an event or a scene. And so, I think, that's typically what we get throughout the Bible, not just the book of Acts. We get in enough detail that the person reading or the person hearing, their brain can sort of mentally piece together the scene in what's happening. They have enough detail to picture what's going on. So that would be the way I approach that question in Acts chapter 2, those questions in Acts chapter 2.

TS: Okay, our second question is by Jacob. He would like to hear your thoughts on the identity of 2 Thessalonians, 'he who now restrains' is mentioned. So he would like to know is that the Holy Spirit, the church, who is that?

MSH: Well, basically it depends on who you read. Some people will say it's the Spirit. Some people will say the church, usually to try to argue for some sort of rapturing thing. Michael is another candidate that you'll pickup, especially in academic literature. You'll see some reasonably decent defenses of Michael in that role. I don't think it's actually any of those is. I think it something else. So we'll go with the something else option to that question. I think the restrainer is God, and he's holding back final judgment or in other words the eschatological Day of the Lord so that the fullness of the Gentiles will be brought in. In other words, so that the final tally as it were of Yahweh's children, God's children from among the nations are gathered, paving the way for the judgment of those nations in the day of the Lord, again, because the day of the Lord is two-sided. It's a time of judgment for the wicked and it's a time of vindication for the righteous that 'you do the wise thing where putting your faith in Yahweh and following him'. So I think, again, it's God.

He's holding back the judgment, the final reclamation of the nations in judgment to bring in, usher in a global Eden where all the earth now belongs to God. So that's getting held

back until, again, this fullness of the Gentiles comes in. Now you ask, where in the world do you get that? Here's a hard part of the question for me. There's no way I can explain to you why I take that view unless you do some of the research and the reading I've done. Now what I've asked Trey to do for the listeners is that there's an article that goes through this view by a New Testament scholar and Roger Allison. I don't know if he's still teaching or even living, but it's a really excellent article. It's on the restrainer and, specifically, this point. How Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 repurposes Isaiah 66, the language of Isaiah 66, throughout that chapter in both the Masoretic text and the Septuagint, and even they're examples that he brings out where Paul apparently read the Hebrew text and created his own Greek. In other words, he didn't quote the Septuagint. He did it on the fly in his letter to produce this view. So I believe 2 Thessalonians 2 is repurposing and interpreting as, in fulfillment, language Isaiah 66. Now, if you can read a good deal of Hebrew or Greek, you could read that article with great benefit and understand why Mike lands where he does.

If you can't, there's really not much help but at least you know where I'm coming from and why, if not being able to trek through all the details of how that works. I should add that this is a good example. Often times I get questions and you hope it doesn't happen during like a live Q&A but it occasionally happens where, in my case, it's usually somebody at church where someone will ask you a question and I think to myself, I'd love to answer that question but I need to explain these 10 other things to you first so that you'll be able to process my answer. And this sort of feels like that to me because it's complicated. And the reason I think the way I do is really because of nuts and bolts Greek and Hebrew minutia stuff. And so it's very difficult for me to use an English Bible and walk people through why I think the way I do. But they're just situations like that where that's about all I can accurately tell people and hope that they can follow through with it. But some questions are just like that. This is one of them.

TS: Sure, but just being able to steer somebody in a particular direction is useful enough. And I will post that link on the website, so just click on episode 40 and you should see the link in there. Okay on this third question here Mike, in episode 37 I kind of referenced the dinosaurs, how I think Genesis chapter 1, maybe that's where, between one and two, Adam and Eve is created, and millions of years could have passed. I kind of mentioned, for me personally, my opinion, that's where the dinosaurs are. And John, one of our listeners, e-mailed me just basically a statement, but I'm going to throw it as a question towards you. He said that there may well be a reference to what may be called the dinosaurs in Scripture. Genesis 1:21 mentions creation of the, well, you're going to have to help me on this Hebrew. [MSH: *Taninim gedolim*] And so he was wondering in some places are called great sea creatures. Ezekiel 29:3 refers to them as crocodiles he says. True or false? Dragons like you said. Could you maybe just a touch on that and elaborate?

MSH: This is actually a really complicated question. Just generally upfront, I don't see any evidence in the Bible for dinosaurs. I don't see how biblical writers would've known about dinosaurs unless they ran across a skeleton or something like that. But, again, how would they process that? They probably called it a dragon. I don't see any evidence for living dinosaurs during the biblical period or anything like that. So having said that, I don't think the biblical material really pertains to what we would think of as dinosaurs at all anyway. And here's why it gets really complicated anyway. You have this term *tannin* or *taninim*, both of them can actually

be plural endings in semantic but I don't want to digress into that. These things, these creatures, we'll just call them, are mentioned in connection with several themes in the Old Testament. Now the question sort of situates one of them. Genesis 1:21 is obviously a creation theme. Now before we even hit the language, we need to back up and think about Genesis 1. There are a number of scholars, it's not so prevalent now as it was, I don't know, a few decades ago, but because you have creation episodes, creation descriptions outside of Genesis 1 in the Bible that have God slaying a dragon or a sea monster, Psalm 74 is probably the best example here, because you have those scenes, that sort of triggered a whole way of approaching all creation texts in Genesis, at least one time.

And the reason is this. If you look at Psalm 74, the notion was look, here the God of Israel has slain this great sea beast, and that's associated with creation language. It's also, as I'll point out a few minutes, associated with Exodus language but let's stick with creation now, this one category. Since God is slaying this beast, and that is associated with the act of creation, this is just like certain Babylonian creation stories. The biggest example would be a Enuma Elish, where in the end, Marduk slays a great sea dragon and chops the carcass, splits it in half, and one half he makes the sea and the other half makes the dryland. So you've got, you know, this destruction of this beast and out of that comes the heavens and the earth. And in the Babylonian story, Marduk, when he does this, brings order out of chaos because the sea dragon, the sea beast were just making life miserable or making creation impossible. And so Marduk wanted to make the earth habitable for humans. And so this beast has to be slain and then the heavens and earth that humans will inhabit and experience are created, thereby. So it's this story of bringing order out of chaos, and the Babylonian material uses, again as a chaos symbol, a great sea beast. Now the reason why you see that, not only in Babylonian material but also in lots of other material, is that the sea was otherworldly to an ancient near Eastern person, really an ancient person. And it's because it isn't where people live. You can't live on the sea. You can't live in the sea. The sea is chaotic, it's untamable, it's wild it's threatening. You'll die if you're not in on a boat, that I kind of thing. It's unpredictable.

The sea was an otherworldly place. You'll actually get like Egyptian text that talk about smaller bodies of water on the periphery of their boundaries. And the Egyptians will actually refer to bodies of water like the sea, which is the end or they'll equate the sea with the afterlife or the netherworld because to them, it spoke of unpredictability and death and humans can't live there, that kind of thing. So it was just an otherworldly place. Now when you're out of the sea in a boat and you see big animals in it, whether whales and sharks or whatever it is, you tend to associate those things, these huge creatures that, again, don't live on land, are not things you normally see but they live in this otherworldly place, they lend themselves to, again, being portrayals, symbolic portrayals, of that place. And that's why you have in the ancient near East a lot of this kind of symbology, great sea creatures that represent chaos and death and disorder and all this kind of stuff.

Well, Enuma Elish, the Babylonian story, again, since the supposition was, and you get this in biblical literature, you get it in Mesopotamian literature, you get it in Egyptian literature, that before there was any land to inhabit for human habitation, there was just water. And so the primeval mound rises up out of the water, either at the command of the god or is created by the god from some pre-existing material. In this case, it's the carcass, at least half the carcass, of this great sea beast. So Marduk brings order out of chaos and creates dryland for human habitation. Of course, Marduk creates people, too, and that kind of stuff. So since scholars were familiar

with these stories, when they would look up the passages like Psalm 74, they thought, well that's really a good match for this whole idea, and then they'd go back to Genesis 1 and ask, well, is this stuff in Genesis 1?

And what you get is, you get really two things. You get Genesis 1:21, the reference to the *taninim*, and you also get the word *tehom*, which is in most English translations translated the deep. Now *tehom*, again, a few decades ago, this was accepted as a coherent argument. It's not so much now and I'll explain why. But *tahom* was thought to be the Hebrew equivalent of *tiamot*, which was the name of the sea dragon in the Babylonian Enuma Elish story. And so, the supposition was *tehom* and *taninim*, there is no battle going on in Genesis 1. And so what the writer of Genesis 1 is trying to convey is that when the God of Israel, who's the real creator, started doing his thing, these forces were already held in check. There was no need for a battle. They were submissive and bound and so it was a theological polemic. It was a theological slant to how the Israelite viewed creation that our God doesn't even need to have this fight. Now, of course, it doesn't work in Psalm 74, but, again, this was the thinking. Nowadays, what you have is in Psalm 74, the reference to Leviathan there and you also get Leviathan referred to in Psalm 74. Let me just go to the passage and find the passage here and read it for people/ Psalm 74 beginning in verse 12, the psalmist says,

¹² Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the midst of the earth.

¹³ You divided the sea by your might;
you broke the heads of the sea monsters [**MSH: and there's our word, *taninim***] on the waters.

¹⁴ You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. [**MSH: well that's odd. I thought we were in the sea, now we're in the wilderness all of the sudden. Because in verse 14 it's going to transition to Exodus language, and then go back to creation language. And you get to verse 16]**

¹⁶ ...
you have established the heavenly lights and the sun.

¹⁷ You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth;

MSH: Again, this is language right out of Genesis 1, so there's something going on there. But to get back to the point, people looked at this and thought, Leviathan, that doesn't look anything like *tehom*. It doesn't look like anything like *tiamot*. What's going on here? Well, in 1929, the Ugaritic material was discovered. Prior that discovery, everything was sort of Babylonian oriented when it came to Genesis, at least in the academic world. And it took a little while for the Ugaritic material to get translated and sort of become the scholarly focus. But the point is that nowadays, people look at Psalm 74 and they don't see the Babylonian story. They see the Ugaritic story because in the Ugaritic story, you have the same terms. You have *tanum* or *tanuna*, again, it's the same thing as the *taninim*, and you also have *lotan* or *livyatan*, which is the same thing as Leviathan in the Hebrew Bible. And that story, the Ugaritic story, is not about the creation of the world.

It's about who is supreme in the Divine Council. And in the Babylonian story, you read through that the Baal cycle, Baal eventually emerges as the top dog, the vice regent still under El's authority, but he becomes the chosen co-ruler among all the other gods. And he does so by destroying, defeating *letanu*, winning this battle. And so since the terminology is so close, scholars looked at it and it was such a close match, it's got to be this instead of the Babylonian stuff. And then they took that back to Genesis 1 and said, you know, this is probably not aimed at the Babylonians. It's probably, again, a reference to, in this case, Canaanite religions, the Baal stuff. But again, *tahom* there is actually a Ugaritic word for that that means the recesses of the deep, just like our English translations of *tahom* would have, the deep. So that made sense but it was also the place where, again, these sea creatures lived. And since the sea creatures, *taninim*, sort of used to, as an equivalent, to Leviathan in Psalm 74, the idea was that Genesis 1 is really describing a Leviathan, *letanu*, already subdued by the God of Israel. And so the focus of the comparison changed in that respect.

That was all a long way of explaining how an ancient near Eastern person would look at this. They're not seeing dinosaurs like you and I would think of them. This is about it chaos language and chaos symbology that is drawn from the otherworldly place known as the sea or the ocean. But the whole point of their stories is, again, things like who restrains chaos? Who is the king of the gods? And so when the biblical writer starts taking this kind of material and swapping in Yahweh, the point is theological. It's not paleontological or biological. It's a slap in the face of what a Canaanite would believe. If you have an Ugaritic person or Canaanite person happen to read or hear the biblical story of creation, they would get it instantly. You're dissing Baal, you're dissing our god. You're saying your god's the real creator. You're saying your god's better. And the first 11 chapters of Genesis are just cluttered with that kind of thing. There is a lot of Mesopotamian stuff. When my book *Unseen Realm* comes out, the whole Genesis 6 theme is cast against the *apkallu* from Babylon, the semi-divine giant figures, all a kind of stuff. Genesis 1 to 11 takes swipes at just about everything in the religious world of the ancient near East. And you even get Egyptian stuff.

The whole idea of creation by the spoken word actually is a swipe at the Egyptian god Ptah, because Ptah theology in an Egyptian literature is the only other place in the ancient world, ancient near Eastern Mediterranean world that describes creation by the spoken word, by the breath of the mouth. And so, it is a very deliberate swipe at that point of that story of that theology that the biblical writer wants to make sure that they're hitting all the bases, essentially that they're there and they're not to leave any other rival claim of any other deity untouched. They're going to hit them all. And that's what they do in the Genesis story. So you have creation themes for this dragon language or the sea beast language. And you have, again, what you have, I guess I could describe as sort of theological polemic going on, but the third thing you have is you have historical enemies of the people of God, pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, are both described with this terminology, either Leviathan or *taninim* or even something like that. In other words, they are painted with the same terminology; again, because now the pharaoh, the oppressing pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar, we all know what he did, these are the prime enemies of the people of God.

They are the embodied forces of chaos against God's people. And that's why this language is attributed to them. Can all of us think in the audience of a New Testament example where the great enemy of God is associated in some way with the Dragon? Hello? The book of Revelation, and a lot of that draws on Isaiah 24-27, which is apocalyptic literature in Isaiah that,

guess what, the day of the Lord comes and Leviathan is finally destroyed. There's sort of a network of ideas. This is a network of ideas that tracts through certain portions of the Old Testament and certain portions of the New Testament. And so, if you're asking me, of course you are, that is how I view all of this such language, because it's bigger than the Bible itself. You will find this sort of thing in religious texts, in mythologies across the ancient world. And I don't think, coincidentally, they're drawn from sort of the same bag of tricks. It's the sea and the creatures in the sea because, again, that's just a horrifying terrifying place. You are not safe when you're on the sea. It's unpredictable. It's wild and untamed. It's chaotic. You could die real fast and, again, because of who they were, we could look at it and say it's kind of primitive thinking. Okay, well, so what if it is? But this is the way they thought about these things and the way they conveyed certain ideas. And so that's how I approach this sort of monster language in the Old Testament. And I think it's just the way it needs to be approached because it's consistent both within and outside the Bible.

TS: So what you're saying is, in Revelations, it could be a T. Rex coming at us, right?

MSH: No I don't think we're going to see a real T.Rex

TS: Okay, because that's much more scarier to me. I see a T.Rex coming, I don't know.

MSH: I'd take that as probably something to take down with a good-sized bomb as opposed to something that Satanic.

TS: Jurassic Park's got a whole new meaning to it. No, I appreciate you going into detail with all of that. That information is fascinating and I don't think too many people spend a whole lot of time explaining that or even have the ability to explain that to people like lay people like me.

MSH: Well, I think it's really cool because of the language gets picked up in the Second Temple period. This is where you get, it gets tied all sorts of things, the Ouroboros, the serpent with the its tail in its mouth, and you get into rabbinic literature and you get Leviathan and behemoth imagery in that sort of literature, again, really doing the same thing. You know, the enemies of God get betrayed by these things. You get in certain texts, this is kind of interesting, but in certain texts, when Leviathan or the beast, you know, just look at the terminology in Revelation, the beast that comes from the sea, what a surprise. And, of course, in Revelation there is no more sea. This is why. Chaos is done away with. There is no more disorder but you get the imagery of this great like Divine banquet, the marriage supper of the lambs when the New Testament has it. Well, there's Jewish rabbinic stuff that have you sort of the end, when the day Lord comes, there's this Divine banquet. And you get some text, guess what's served at dinner? It's Leviathan. Again, it's this imagery of its done now. This beast is finally dead, like really dead, and it's never to come back again. We'll never have to worry about this again because now we're in a perfect place, the new Eden. There is no threat of this anymore. So it actually works itself out into texts of Jewish and Christian outside the Bible in some real interesting ways.

TS: We'll use the leftovers for oil.

MSH: Yeah, there you go.

TS: OK, well great. I appreciate that. The next question is from me. In episode 36, talking about the 12 apostles, I have a fascination and I wanted to get your opinion on it. I'm curious why 12 apostles? I mean all the numbers in the Bible, are they divine? Isaac Newton, who I'm a big fan of, he dedicated his life work with Bible in mind so I'm curious what your opinion about any numbers, the dimensions, tabernacles, all these things have specific numbers associated with them. Are those particular numbers divine in nature?

MSH: Well I think it would depend on what you mean by the question. I don't think math was invented by God. I don't think numbers have some sort of spiritual life or something like that. I wouldn't use the word divine. I would say that the order that math helps us see and understand, in other words, the elegance or the symmetry of creation, of nature, of life as it runs, all the stuff that math applies to, which is frankly just about everything, all that stuff math is a human invention. There are different mathematical schemes but they all bring into view design. And I do think design is part of creation. So, ultimately, numbers and math take us back to a creator through to the root of the order and the symmetry that they help us discern and understand. So that's the way I would approach it. I think it might just be a language difference there. But like specific numbers in Scripture, I do think some of them have, are there for more than just counting.

I mean you have, you brought up the number 12 specifically, and again, while we do have the 12, which is the tribes of Israel, which is the apostles, and you put them together to get the 24 elders, all I can stuff. While I think there is certainly something to that, I also think in that, this might freak some people out, unless they've read fairly deeply into some of the stuff I've done or if they've read the Portent, let's put it that way. But I think there are certain numbers like 12 that have to do also with the zodiac, what I would call astral theology, and I don't mean astrology like Ms. Cleo, like who am I going to marry? How much money am I going to make, and all that kind of nonsense. The assumption the ancient world among Jews, this is why you find zodiac mosaics in Jewish synagogues. Well, were they apostates? No they're not but their belief was, hey, we read Genesis and it says that God made the stars and he made the heavenly celestial objects and there for times and seasons, this is language right out of Genesis. So they're put there by God and God's in control of them and we can look up at the sky ourselves and we can see patterns and so maybe, just maybe, if we really sort of watch that long enough, maybe we could figure out that God is either trying to communicate what he's doing or we can sort of somehow understand that he's up to something. And you get this in Psalm 19 and specifically Paul's use of Psalm 19.

Again, for people who've read the Portent, this is not going to be unfamiliar. But if you go to Romans 10, this is Paul's discussion, well, I'll go back to verse 14, Paul's talking about the Jews and the Gentiles, all the stuff and the Messiah. He says in verse 14,

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the

gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for

“Their voice [**MSH: Here he starts quoting Ps 19**] has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.”

MSH: Now to go back in Psalm 19, there's a text critical issue in Psalm 19. It either says, it's talking about the sun, moon, and stars and all that kind of stuff in Psalm 19. And it says, 'either their voice has gone out to all the earth'. That's the Septuagint. That's what Paul quotes. In other words, somehow they believe that the stars could speak. They could message something and Paul's actually saying, he's actually connecting that idea to the gospel or at least to Christ. The Masoretic text says, 'they're line has gone out to all the earth', and that's a reference to the ecliptic, of course, is that the path the constellations follow, the constellations of the zodiac. So I use that for an illustration to say that there was this idea that God could communicate things through the heavens. Again, this isn't astrology as we think of it because scholars refer to it as astral theology or astral prophecy. It's a known genre much later in the Greco-Roman world. And a lot of people, I shouldn't say a lot of people, some people think that Revelation is largely an astral theological book.

And I think there's something to that. I wouldn't go as far as some others. And I don't think that Paul is saying that you could look at the constellations and sort of get the Romans Road out of it. What I think Paul is actually alluding to here is what we read in Revelation 12. I can't prove that but that's my suspicion. I think the tradition we have we have preserved in Revelation 12 about, and I actually take when John says 'I look to the heavens and saw,' I think he's serious. I think John is reporting in Revelation 12 what the Magi saw in the sky at the time of the Messiah's birth. And I think Paul picks up on that. And so the point is that people could have known that a divine king had arrived. And it just so happened that if you do the math, here we are back to math. If you do the math, you can arrive at a specific date that I think, again, not coincidentally, coincides with *Rosh Hashanah*, which is the day of the inauguration of every new Israelite king. And it also coincides with Jewish tradition about Noah and the timing of the flood. And we go back to Genesis 6 and let's have a party there, and there's all these things, again, that are converging in the birth of the Messiah. Now I don't do much of that in my upcoming book, *Unseen Realm*.

This is stuff for book 2. Again, for the audience, I'm not lying when I say that I have a whole other book just sort of waiting to get written. The *Myth* book I know is packed with a lot of stuff, but that is the first installment. There's a lot that the is left over, and I do a little bit of this in the *Portent*. Again, I fictionalize some of this content in the *Portent*, as well. But those are sort of all teasers or all sort of dropping this and that. To get back to the question, I think that really yes, that some numbers in Scripture do telegraph these sorts of ideas. And this is a little bit beyond your normal gematria. If you're familiar with gematria, that's when certain languages use the letters of the alphabet to correspond to numbers. Greek does that. Hebrew does that. Aramaic did it, you know. Not every language does but a lot of them did. And so there are places, 666 is the best example where he gives you the number so you're not supposed to guess at the number. You're supposed to guess what the number means. And it's a human number.

Well, no kidding. That's actually a hint as to how to think about it. It's gematria. That number means something. And not only does it mean something in terms of the letters that the numbers form, but that has to be framed within a certain wider context, which is what a lot of people don't do when they interpret 666 and other things in Revelation. The dove, when Jesus is baptized, the Spirit descends on Him like a dove. Well, there is no Old Testament passage that has that sort of imagery.

You go back to Genesis 1, the hovering, it's not a dove there. You don't actually have a bird named. If you take the Greek word for dove and put it through the gematria mill, the sum total of those letters is, again, I don't think coincidentally, the same sum total as the letters alpha and omega. Again, I just don't think that's accidental. There's another one in John I don't want to bring up, the 153 fish, because I use that in the Portent and that would be a plot spoiler. But there are just things like this going on that transcend the text. And I do think there is a biblical numerology. I think a lot of what you pick up and read, sort of, is too imaginative. It just sort of takes the ball and runs with it all over the place. The way I think it should be approached is, can you situate what you think is going on here, A, does it have exegetical foundation, and the thing I just gave you in Romans 10 does because Paul is quoting Psalm 19. Does it have exegetical foundation and does it make sense within the wider ancient near Eastern, ancient Mediterranean, culture of the time.

If you can situate what you think you see in those two ways, I think you might be onto something. So certain numbers do have that sort of appeal. The number 40, I think, is artificial. And what I mean by that is, if you actually concord that, it's like everything in the Old Testament happens in 40s. Again, that is a little too coincidental for me. I think the point there is either a generational thing or it's a literary way that people back then would've understood as completing a generation or completing a reign or something like that. There's this completion aspect to it because it just shows up everywhere. It has its own sort of broad associations because of where it's used. So some numbers I think certainly have, I guess I could say, divine telegraphing because, again, under inspiration, they're being used to telegraph certain ideas. But in and of themselves, numbers, I don't think there's any divine quality about math or about numbers. I think it just depends on their usage.

TS: Interesting fascinating subject for me.

MSH: It's really cool stuff, and again, some of this will be, Lord willing, if there's a book after Unseen Realm, some of it will be in that because I do find it really interesting. And certainly, future fiction installments, it's something that I'm going to dip into again, because it's quite fascinating. And, again, 666 my mind just goes back to because if you're just doing gematria with 666, and we've all read this stuff. Well it was Henry Kissinger. Oh it was this president. Oh it was that guy. Oh it's Nero. If that's all you're doing, you're just scratching the surface. There are things that you are not thinking about, and probably aren't even aware of that you need to be thinking about, that will help you make sense of that, maybe for a different reason. But I don't want to get too far into that because there's a number of directions it could take and, again, I'm not going to pretend I'm a prophet. I'm not a prophet. But there are things that I could see as possibilities there that I've not seen in print. Let's just put it that way. There are one or two that you could find in what I like to refer to as the fugitive literature, again, this academic stuff that maybe 10 scholars in the world will ever find that article and read it which is unfortunate. But

there are just things going on, at least potentially going on there, that your popular prophecy writers, just put them away. Just put them away. That's probably one of the best pieces of advice I can give you. And if you want some leads, I'm more than happy to give data. But that the popular stuff just put it away.

TS: Well alright. I think you did pretty good on four questions.

MSH: Yeah well, we had a chance to chit chat so that's what it becomes anyway, and I like light chitchat.

TS: Well we just want to remind the listeners that there our podcast comes out Friday Saturday's thereabouts , and the transcripts usually come about 4-5 days after, so I usually post the transcript probably Tuesdays or Wednesdays, so be looking for those on those days if you're interested. Mike, is there anything else you would like to add to this show? Do you know what we'll be discussing next week?

MSH: Well, we'll be jumping into Acts 3 and we may do the whole chapter. We'll start speeding up a little bit, just depending on where I'll be parking, we may do the whole chapter.