

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

Number 62

"Q&A 5"

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With

**Residential Layman
Trey Stricklin**

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TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 62, Q&A 5. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing this week?

MSH: Very good, it's been a busy week.

TS: Are you getting more excited that baseball's winding up or football's starting?

MSH: In other words, am I getting excited the Red Sox agony is soon over? Yes, I am looking forward to that. Yeah, I'm looking forward to football season and the naked bible fantasy football league will be on the radar real quickly, looking forward to it.

TS: Well, all right, we've got probably about 11 or 12 questions this week. I want to remind everybody that we probably have 30+ questions in the queue so we have plenty of questions for more Q&A shows. So just bear with us. We're trying to get to them and just know that we will get to everybody's questions that e-mail me at treystricklen@gmail.com. And with that Mike, I guess we could just jump into it with our first question.

And this first question is from Gary, and I believe you might have eluded to this of the previous question-and-answer episode, but his question is, there is a prominent person who can be heard on the Internet espousing the stance that it is biblical to defend yourself with deadly force when attacked with deadly force. There is also another person that has spoken of being in several life-threatening situations that took the stance to ask for that person to be forgiving for his actions in prayer while the threatening was happening. There is a big difference in the stances. I would tend to side with the latter because of what Peter, Paul and the other disciples did in those situations. The other person sites the Old Testament and David for the position they take. Are both right?

MSH: We did touch on this in a prior Q&A a little bit from a different, I guess different but sort of the same, angle to it at the same time. He asked are both right? I do think that there is no prescribed stance to take on this. Again, let's take the instance of Abraham. So when Abraham pursues the people who kidnapped Lot, again, Lot is a relative of his, he's going to rescue them. Was Abraham wrong? Did he sin by defending Lot and his children, so on and so forth, from probably slavery, perhaps physical harm, perhaps rape. Was Abraham wrong to do that? Well, I don't think so.

When David or another Israelite king defends his people from an attacker, from some hostile external enemy, should he just like lay down his arms and prayed? I understand that you can say that but we read in Scripture is that they did fight to defend themselves and God honored them. God gave them victory over that. Why not when we go into the conquest, if this is the principle that God never wants us to use physical force to protect ourselves, why didn't they just march into Canaan and have a prayer meeting and then the Canaanites would of either all dropped over dead or just ran away and left? That's not what happened. God told them to go in and work for the conquest and that involves physical force. I just see a lot of variance here. Let me just bring up one other thing. What about less violent options to protect ourselves? So what I mean by that is, if the point of this 'we should never use force' kind of argument is that we

should allow the oppressor or allow the enemy to harm us, we should be willing to let them harm us and never raise a hand to protect ourselves, well then why not abandon less violent options to avoid harm?

Things like deception. There's very clear examples in Scripture where God uses deception to protect people. God honors a person's use of deception to protect an innocent life. There are examples like this. Well, why would God specifically, some cases explicitly, commend believers for doing that when what they really should have been doing is nothing and sort of asking God to do the deliverance and letting things happen the way they happened? If that was really the godly thing to do and really the only godly option, then why use any means? My point is, I don't think we're given a prescription for this. I think there are a variety of things you see in Scripture that are acceptable, theologically acceptable, ethically acceptable. We have passages like Luke 22:36 where Jesus says that the one who has no sword should sell his cloak and buy one in his discussion with the disciples going out and encountering resistance. You get Matthew 26 as well where those who live by the sword die by the sword, and you saw well, where's the balance between those things?

I think the point is that what's ruled out of Scripture is offensive aggression, that we assume, okay, I have a problem. In other words, the problem isn't that I need to protect my life or protect the lives of my family or some other innocent person. That's not the problem that I have in view but if we think well, I have a problem. I need more money. I need resources. I need this. I need that, something other than the defense and protection of innocent life, we're disallowed from thinking in that mode that I need X or I'm going to solve this problem by means of violence. That's what is clearly disallowed in Scripture. Jesus, when he talks about buying a sword in Luke 22, it's for self-defense. Jesus says elsewhere, I'm not come to essentially bring people together but to bring a sword. He knows that there's going to be conflict between believers who, people who accept his message and become his follower and other people, even within their own family.

There's going to be conflict. There's going to be persecution. And so I take a passage like Luke 22:36 as a recommendation of self-defense. And I think that's quite consistent with Old Testament examples and just the larger philosophical question. If we're just supposed to do nothing then why would God allow any of these things or approve of any of these things, whether they're violent, such as a warfare situation, a defensive warfare to protect yourself against an enemy or even nonviolent options like deception. Why does God commend those if the only real godly option is to essentially do nothing and ask God to intervene on your behalf? That just isn't the pattern. But I think you can do that. I would never say you shouldn't do that. There's something wrong with that. I think that's your decision. But I also think it's equally wrong for you to say that's the only godly decision because that isn't what you see in either Testament.

TS: Okay, our next question is from Amy in Massachusetts. I'm curious to know what biblically is considered abuse by God in contrast to what our culture determines as abuse. Passages such as spare not the rod, servants be subject to your masters with all fear but only the good and gentle for this is thankworthy, all have carried a lot of weight.

MSH: I am sort of assuming a little bit here that this person who's asking the question maybe was in this situation or victimized or their parents were abusive or whatnot. So I'll try to not let

that color my entire response here but let's just pick up spare not the rod. Spare not the rod essentially means, broadly, don't neglect to discipline your children. It doesn't mean give them as much physical pain as you think they can stand. It's a recommendation to not neglect to discipline your children. In biblical culture was one that practiced corporal punishment and it did things like including slavery.

We had the reference in the question to serving your masters with fear, not only the good and gentle but the ones that aren't so good and gentle. Biblical culture also forbade women from having certain legal rights and whatnot. But my point here is that the Bible nowhere endorses a culture. God invade people's lives at a specific time and place and those people in that place and time had a given culture. God didn't zap the culture of the biblical writers into existence before he spoke to them or when he spoke to them. They were who they were when God decided to give them revelation and prompt them to write things down that we would later call Scripture, what we would later call the Bible.

He didn't create their culture for them as though it was a divine culture or divinely ordained culture. God didn't create the patriarchal culture so he can have a relationship with the patriarchs. It just was what it was and they were who they were. So human culture naturally are human. That's a profound statement. The patriarchal culture would eventually give way to urban culture. When Israel got a homeland, when they did get a homeland, that was a theocratic culture. But think about this, even the theocracy wasn't endorsed as the biblical culture. The theocracy was planned to become obsolete. I'm not so sure people realize that but what I mean by that is, it was always the plan of God to send Christ and include the Gentiles into the people of God, which by definition is an end to the theocracy.

You don't have a circumcision neutral people of God and still have a theocracy, at least one that's outlined like in the Torah, the Pentateuch. God isn't interested in endorsing or sort of concretizing in human culture. He's interested in believing loyalty from his children and for his children to treat each other like the divine imagers they are, how we treat each other matters. So I would say Scripture emphasizes theological truths and moral ideas and principles that transcend culture. So if part of our culture allows corporal punishment, and it does, it is what it is, we shouldn't look back on the biblical culture and look at a verse like spare the rod and say that is a divine mandate to use corporal punishment. God isn't ratifying or endorsing a specific culture. It means don't neglect to discipline your children. You can use corporal punishment but it's not this mandate to give them as much physical pain as they can stand that. That's abusive.

So I would say anyone who's not mimicking the character of God in their discipline is an abuser. And I know people will say, well, when I discipline my kids, I am being like God. Well, abusers who have that mindset, they like to use the analogy of God in the Old Testament like the punishment of the exile, which was pretty harsh. But we aren't like God in such analogies. We don't know when a given judgment is the only solution to rebellion. God did. That's why we got the exile. So since we don't know that this is the only means of correcting a situation or disciplining a child, or doing something like that, we shouldn't be using this analogy to be harsh and to be abusive. We shouldn't treat people as though we have that kind knowledge or foreknowledge or omniscience because we don't. So, I know this is sort of a roundabout thing but it is sort of a roundabout topic.

God sometimes chastens us with pain through Providence and other times he doesn't, in other words, that he allows our decisions to produce the pain and hardship that bad decisions produce. Sometimes God does that. He isn't out there casting lightning bolts at us. People suffer

for sin or suffer because of bad decisions because of the law of sowing and reaping, not because God is looking at us and saying great, they did this. I get to cast a lightning bolt down on them. That is not the nature God and if we discipline like that, we're not mimicking the character of God. If we treat people abusively to get them to do something we want them to do, even though that might be a good thing, God doesn't do that either. I mean God is perfectly willing to let us behave as we want and persist in our sin knowing that it will ultimately cause us to suffer because he has the ability to in turn bring good people into our lives and steer us to discover the error of our own ways.

He doesn't have to coerce and manipulate us. He can still work with us. He doesn't need to intervene and abuse his power on us. God uses people to help change our lives. This is just what God does. In any respect, he never enjoys our suffering even when he can see that if you persist in this activity the law of sowing and reaping says you are going to suffer. Even though God can see that, he doesn't take pleasure in it. He doesn't use it to manipulate us and things like that. So that's a roundabout way to address the question but I don't think God is mean and coercive and manipulative. I think God will let us suffer and many people do because of the results of their own actions. They persist in sin and pay the consequences. But God is always there to try to redeem us and restore us and allows those things to happen so that we would be receptive to the good things he wants for us, too. And we can pretend that that's what we're doing in the way we treat people and the way we treat our children. We can pretend to do that but I think it really needs more self-examination. So if we're abusing our own power and we get any pleasure out of it, where we pretend that I can do this because God used harsh punishment like the exile, to me that's pretty misguided. It assumes too much of us than really we ought to be assuming.

TS: The next question is from Robert and to set up the question, he says the church is the only group where I felt most competent and where, at the very least, could survive while doing something that I love to do, helping people, So I thought that if I bought the most powerful Bible study tool the world and dedicated my life to learning, I would one day have the hope of being a pastor of the church. But what I'm finding out is that churches don't typically care what you know but only what you can do. In other words, if you don't have at least an arts degree, no one wants to hire you. So his question is this. When did being an apologist become so important to church leadership and would the apostles agree with how the educated marginalize the unlearned?

MSH: Oh boy, I could beat this point for a long time. It may surprise listeners to hear this but I'm in the same situation. You say, well, how is also possible Mike? You have a PhD in biblical studies and blah blah blah. Yeah I couldn't get hired for pulpit ministry in thousands of churches today because I don't have an M.Div., this magic piece of paper that pastors are supposed to have. When I was in grad school getting ready to leave, I applied to church ministries to be like an assistant pastor. I had never pastored so I wasn't really thinking I should be a senior pastor. But I got the one interview and I probably sent 15 or 20 applications. I was a Bible studies professor. I was getting the PhD. I'd publish stuff. It didn't matter. I didn't have an M.Div. so people couldn't classifying me.

I didn't have a very specific seminary endorsement. Frankly, I didn't have any seminary endorsement. Nobody knew what to do with me so I get what this person is asking, what Robert

is asking here now. I would also though, having said that, suggest that you're really asking the wrong question. You're not being marginalized by the learned. You're being marginalized by the shallow and lazy, that is, people who can't think independently of their own tradition and denominational machinations. Now I say shallow and lazy because instead of evaluating a person for what that person knows and who they are in terms of their character, deacons and elder boards let an external body or school print a piece of paper that relieves them from thinking, relieves them from responsibility. They only see the paper and since so many elders and deacons frankly, I'm being blunt here, don't know much Scripture either, in other words they either don't in fact know enough to evaluate a pastor or they think they don't, they feel safe when someone has the piece of paper.

They don't have to get up to speed on theology and doctrine and exegesis. They don't have to do the work to get up to speed to make such evaluations themselves. That's why I'm saying you're being marginalized by the shallow and lazy. I know that sound's harsh but that is the reality. Stated more positively, I'm trying to be fair to the people who are evaluating you as best I can, but to me the solution is do your homework and evaluate this person yourself. But most people aren't going to do that. Trying to be fair here, elders and deacon boards and whatnot who are looking for pastors, they don't want to wind up with a heretic or some goofball, and so they do depend on a credentialing third-party to weed those out. My solution is do the work yourself but, again, who's going to do that? I'm a little bit jaded I think. Listeners can tell here but again, they're depending on a third party for credentialing but that still means they're being led by the nose by someone who isn't even present in their church every week to tell them who's qualified and who isn't.

If you're in a denominational setting, Robert is the name the questioner as I recall, if you're in a denominational setting, that is not to change. You might just consider leaving if you want a pastor. It just isn't going to change. If you're in some other context, maybe a nondenominational context, that might be an issue of church bylaws. It may be the particular Church has in their bylaws that we won't candidate a person who doesn't have a degree. I don't know. You need to ask, but that's possible. I would say there's no such rule against calling a pastor who isn't degreed, if it isn't an issue of bylaws or something else and the people you're asking about being considered as a pastor can't think well enough that it never occurs to them to create their own means of evaluating your knowledge and character than you'd ever last there anyway.

If they don't have that much of an inner compulsion to do the work themselves, to get up to speed and say look, we have a guy here. We know this is a good guy, doesn't have a degree. There's nothing in our bylaws that requires a degree but to really evaluate this guy, that's going to take work. We have to figure out an alternative means to do that. If they're not willing to think creatively to try to do that, to assess your qualifications, they're probably not willing to work with you on other things. And so, again, you might just consider going somewhere else. Again, to back up to the question, the problem isn't being an Apollos.

You should be. You should be proficient in handling Scripture. It's always been a priority. Apollos didn't have a degree. Those that heard him and spent time talking to him like Priscilla and Aquila saw very clearly he could teach the Scriptures and they didn't ask him to get credentialed. He knew his stuff and they could observe his life. And Paul's instruction to church leadership is clear, that church leadership should study Scripture, interpret well, be apt to teach, so and so forth. So when it comes to that sort of thing, I could just go on and on about that

because I actually have lived that situation. I look at it, well, now you know how I assess it. You're letting this piece of paper do the work for you. How lazy is that? I get it. You don't want a heretic or a nutcase. I understand that completely but you might want to consider putting some more work into it, especially for somebody you know within the congregation who really wants to be in the ministry and is capable. There's no character issues. He's capable. You got a good amount of knowledge.

Dare I say if you know as much as your pastor does, that might be an ego thing too. We can't let this guy who doesn't have a degree because he knows as much as I do and I went and got this degree and it makes my degree look kind of dumb or something like that. But, again, if people are that insecure then somewhere along the line it's going to be some other issue that just gets in the way. Now, sort of a subtext to this question I hear about this line that says they care more about, they don't care about what you know but only what you can do. Again, I could go off on this too. When it comes to people and churches caring more about being served or whether they get enough focused attention on a given Sunday, like, oh, the pastor noticed me and talked to me. They care more about that than what they can learn from the pastor then that's a different problem. You have different questions like since when is church just a time and place? Since when is the ministry something that credentialed staff do as opposed everybody doing it?

Why do we think of, when we hear the word church, why don't we think that's us, that's everybody here? It's not a time and place and a staff. Part of the reason we don't think that is because we haven't been taught to think that way. We haven't been taught a really biblical theology of ministry. That's an altogether different problem. I wouldn't want to take too much on this one but I feel for this questioner. I get it. But if you want to be in the ministry, you're just going to have to convince people to invest the time in evaluating you, and that's not going to happen in a denominational context. It could happen in a nondenominational context. So if you feel God's calling you to that, don't give up. You got to stay with it.

TS: Hang in there Robert. We're praying for you. The next one is from Renée. I understand that a Christian can cast a demon out of a person by the authority of Jesus in the believer. Demons come from the death of the Nephilim Giants ever since the flood of Noah. Okay, so here's the questions. There's two of them. First one is, if you encounter a Nephilim in person and you use the authority of Jesus to ask the Father to rebuke the giant, does this action kill the creature since his spirit would essentially be demon? Now Mike, before you answer this question, can I answer this question before you?

MSH: Go ahead.

TS: If you encounter a Nephilim in person Renee, you run. You run as fast as you can. OK Mike, I guess you can officially answer.

MSH: We're going to go into a second question?

TS: Well, you want to answer this one first before we get into the second one?

MSH: Ok, I actually disagree with the assumption of the question on a couple levels. I think we need to realize first off, and this will be news to a lot of people. Outside the Gospel, there is no passage in the New Testament that tells believers they can cast out demons or should. The only people casting out demons in the New Testament, in the Gospels, it happens in the Gospels, besides Jesus are the Apostles and the 70 Jesus sent out to inaugurate the kingdom of God. Now you might be thinking what about Luke [MARK] 16:17? I'm going to read that to you but I want you to think about what it says and what it doesn't say. Here's Luke [MARK] 16:17,

¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues;

MSH: Now here's the question. Does every believer speak in tongues? Even better, is every believer supposed to speak in tongues? Is every believer empowered to speak in tongues? Well, not according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. Speaking in tongues was a gift given to some, not all. So if that's the case taking that back to Luke [MARK] 16:17, why would we assume that every believer can cast out a demon? If every believer isn't expected to speak in tongues and that's mentioned in Luke [MARK] 16:17 then it would seem to me that this idea of casting out demons is also a gift.

It is also restricted. We can't assume that we have been given this gift, I don't think the idea that every Christian can do this and should try to do it, I don't think there's a scriptural basis for that, for being that categorical and that encompassing. The whole thing about encountering a Nephilim, my answer would be you won't encounter a Nephilim. They died out in the days of David, at least according to the Masoretic text. If you're a fan of the Septuagint, then you could perhaps have Nephilim, Anakim specifically, around as long as the days of Jeremiah. I see no scriptural basis for the idea that Nephilim continued beyond the points that they were judged in the Old Testament. So I don't think you're ever going to encounter a Nephilim in person. So I think that covers the question elements, so if there's a second question, go ahead.

TS: Okay, the next question is are the 144,000 physical virgins, no sexual relations, or could it be that they did not commit fornication with other gods like Old Testament Hebrews?

MSH: Okay, this is actually a really involved question and truth be told here, true confessions here, I'm going to try to be a little circumspect here because some of this is novel number three turf. But I will try to not telegraph anything and still sort of answer this question. We need to read a few things. I'm going to read Revelation 14 because we mentioned the 144,000. So there are two passages where these are mentioned. Let's just take them in order, Revelation 7, we'll go there first. So here is Revelation 7. John says,

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. ² Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, ³ saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have

sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”⁴ And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

MSH: And then you get the list of 12,000 from every tribe. Of course, it's not every tribe because the tribe of Dan is omitted in the list, but we don't need to rabbit trail there. Verse 9 continues,

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,

MSH: Now that group is not the 144,000. How do we know that? Because they're from all tribes and all peoples and all languages, they include Gentiles. So we'll stop there and go to Revelation 14. Here's the other reference to the 144,000, and this is the one the questioner's talking about. John writes,

Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.² And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps,³ and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. [MSH: Hint, Revelation 4-5 is a Divine Council scene, unhint.] No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.⁴ It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb,⁵ and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

MSH: Now, the question is something about this virginity aspect. Are they virgins because they didn't commit fornication with other gods, in other words, they didn't commit the sin of Genesis 6:1-4. I don't know if the questioner was also thinking of idolatry, sort of a not physical sexual violation but sort of using sexual language as a metaphor for idolatry, I don't know if that's behind the question or what but I'll just try to proceed as I can here. If you look at these passages and you think about them a little bit, Revelation 14 and Revelation 7, the scenes, a lot of descriptions are in the heavens and are associated with the Divine Council. Now, it's still a good question because we have 144,000. We have this reference to virginity. We've got some Divine Council context going on.

What's the deal here? I would say the answer has nothing to do with the physical cohabitation with divine beings, with gods. There's no indication here or anywhere else that the Genesis 6 circumstances are part of our world now or part of future eschatology. My own view is the days of Noah passage that's often read to justify that is being misread. So if that's where this comes from, I don't think that's what that passage in Matthew 24 is about at all. But having said that, the virginal description in my mind does relate in some way to the Genesis 6 situation and

the sin of the watchers, it does relate, but it's not going to be a physical relationship. Now, you say how do you parse these things? And here's where I got to be a little careful. The 144,000 perform the functions of priests. You get this priestly language, language of being in the presence of God. They wear the white robes. They're in the throne room of God. It's a Divine Council scene.

It harkens back to Revelation 4-5 specifically, when they're surrounding the throne, the living creatures there, some very clear connections. This is not the notion though that every believer is a priest, so I'm not saying that the 144,000 represents the church as though it's equitable with the church. I'm not saying that because there are other believers besides the 144,000 in these passages. So it's very clear the 144,000 and believers collectively, they're two different groups. They overlap but it's not completely equitable. There are believers outside of these 144,000. So I'm not saying that 144,000 is just another way of talking about the church. Let's just dispense with that. The point of Revelation 14 I would also say can't be that these 144,000 are the only ones who didn't commit fornication with gods or sin in the same manner as the people of Genesis 6:1-4 because that would mean that the other believers we just talked about, remember there are other believers besides 144,000, so if the 144,000 are the only ones who were guilty of not sexually cohabiting with gods, if that's the case, then what about the believers who aren't in the 144,000?

It implies that they did cohabit in that way. And that would mean in the context of the book of Revelation that these other believers are aligned with the beast. You can't have believers aligned with the beast. It just doesn't work. So this is another reason why I'm saying I don't think what's going on here is his literal. I'm not saying it's a synonym for the church. I'm not saying it is literal, it's something else. But there is some relationship to Genesis 6 and the watchers. So okay, Mike, what do you think is going on? I'll try to state what I think is going on here positively and try not to give too much detail here. The phrase 'who have not defiled themselves with women' in Revelation 14 is considered by some scholars and I think that those to make this connection, I think they have a point, that phrase is considered by some scholars as an allusion to 1 Enoch, the Enoch story, the watchers story, the whole episode, that is, the 144,000 would therefore be a sort of reversal or anti-image of the watchers. In other words, the 144,000 would be sort of a counterpart to the watchers because the watchers did defile themselves with women but these 144,000 are clean, are clear of that crime.

That in turn could telegraph the point that the 144,000 are glorified, another scholar term would be angelized or angelimorphic believers. In other words, they aren't human. They're actually more than human, they're glorified humans. They're not humans that are currently alive on the earth who haven't died yet. They are believers who are glorified and become part of the Divine Council and they are sent to counter the forces of the beast. And the way that this opposition is messaged is that here is a group that did not defile themselves with women. They are going to confront the enemies, the spiritual enemies, the divine enemies that did because as you recall, in Revelation 9, 5 chapters earlier is when the abyss is opened. I've said before I think that event is the release of the original offending watchers of Genesis 6 who are let go for a short time before they are destroyed at the Day the Lord. So I think what we have here is not a human, an army of 144,000 Jews, Jewish people taken from the earth, 12,000 from each tribe. You stick something on their forehead and there you go.

I think it's a lot deeper than that. I think what we have here is a collective membership of glorified believers who have been made part of the Divine Council who are specifically sent to

combat the armies of the beast. And who are the armies of the beast? They are the released watchers back in Revelation 9. Now when I was saying this isn't literalized, I'm not going to deny that spiritual warfare happens in connection with events on Earth. I think my listeners know better than that. When I say it's not literal, I'm talking about literal cohabitation, do we have new Nephilim and all that stuff going on. I don't think that's the point at all. And the reason I think you can de-literalize it in that way is because of Revelation 14. Look at the first verse. It says, 'then I looked and behold on Mount Zion stood the lamb.' Well, Revelation 14:1 has the lamb on Mount Zion if we take it literally.

Why is that a problem? Well it's a problem because everywhere else the lamb is described as being in heaven and this can't be literal Mount Zion because Jesus only returns to Mount Zion a few chapters later, Armageddon. SO you can't have Jesus returning here and returning later. You only got one it second coming, And to have the lamb on Mount Zion here, the 144,000, you look at the rest of it, they're before the throne. They're before the living creatures and before the elders. This is a scene in heaven. It's not a scene on Earth, even though it references Mount Zion. So I'm saying this is not a literalistic set of events but nevertheless, spiritual warfare is real and it's being played out in the book of Revelation in relation to events on Earth. You have both realms going at it. It's a war between gods and men, gods and gods and gods and men.

If you're familiar with the Dead Sea Scrolls, this is the war scroll, the divine beings and human beings in really Mortal Kombat on their own respective planes, and even in some cases sort of intersecting, to have this ultimate end of days battle. So yes, there is something happening on Earth. There is something happening in the unseen realm. And they have a symbiotic relationship one to the other and they do overlap. But that's different than saying we've got a bunch of people who've screwed around or not screwed around with Nephilim or other gods and all this kind of stuff. That's over-literalizing the passage. And what I'm saying is if you look at Revelation 14 and Revelation 7 even, but especially Revelation 14, this scene is in the Divine Council. It's on the spiritual plane. It is not on Earth, otherwise you have a problem with Jesus returning before he ever returns on Earth. It's not in the air and the rapture and all that kind of stuff if you believe in rapture.

He is on Mount Zion. He's standing on Mount Zion. He's touching the earth. Like the pretrib system, that is how they distinguish between a rapture and the second coming. Well, the rapture he doesn't land on Earth. He's in the clouds. That's different than the second coming when his foot hits the Mount of Olives and all that stuff. Look, you got right here in Revelation 14 when the lamb is standing, he stood, he's standing on Mount Zion. And I'm saying if that's literal, then you've got a contradiction between Revelation 14 and the later chapters when Jesus does return to the Mount of Olives at the Battle of Armageddon. You have a real problem. Your literalism is going to cause a contradiction here. So, again, I know that's involved, it's complex, it's convoluted to some extent, but that's probably the best I can do in this Q&A. And again, I going to be using some of these ideas in something I'm going to do later in the fiction. So I don't want to get into all the details but frankly it wouldn't translate well to audio anyway because it's really complicated. So I think I'll try to keep it right there.

TS: We'll be looking forward to that book for sure. Our next question is from Tom. I had a discussion about Israel and the church the other day and I brought up 1 Peter 2:9-12 as a reference. I was told that 1 Peter 1:1 is addressed to Jews and thus the letter should be taken in

that context. I then asked what about the Hosea reference from Romans 9:25-26. That points to the Gentiles in the same context as used in 1 Peter 2:9-10 and was told that Romans 9:25-26 is not referring to Gentiles and to use the Old Testament context as my guide. What's your thoughts?

MSH: Well, my thoughts are you're right and that person's wrong. A little more seriously, 1 Peter 1:1, it just says, 'Peter, apostle to Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus Galatea Cappadocia,' so-and-so forth, so 1 Peter 1:1 references the dispersion of the diaspora, so does James 1:1. James 1:1 says, 'James a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the 12 tribes in the dispersion, greetings.' Now what's the difference between the two? James is more specific. He actually narrows his description to the 12 tribes. Peter just has elect exiles. Now the point is that if Peter meant specifically Jews, he could have made that more clear, just like James did. Another issue related to this is whether 1 Peter uses the language of exile as a literal strategy to refer to Jews as opposed to Gentiles or whether the language of exile is being used as an analogy to speak of Christians in exile, that is, Christians scattered all over the place, believers scattered all over the place, Jew or Gentile.

Now, a lot of scholars think the latter is the case which would argue in favor of the questioner over against the person who told them the 1 Peter is just addressed the Jews. But why could the latter be the case? Why could Peter be using this language as an analogy to speak of Christians generally and not specifically Jews? There are a couple of reasons that I'll just pick these two. There are more than two but I think these are probably the easiest to relay here. First, the dispersion refers to the fact that Jews were scattered among the nations, at least that much. Acts 2 describes the dispersion. But thousands of Jews in the dispersion returned to Pentecost. They heard the gospel, they went back to the nations they were in, they were dispersed to, and they began to spread the gospel resulting in Gentile conversions. So the Gentiles by default therefore become part of the dispersion.

They're just by definition part of the dispersion. It sounds, secondly, from 1 Peter 2:12, let's just read that. It says, 'keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds and glorify God in the day of visitation.' So here, Peter refers to the Gentile. So it sounds in 1 Peter 2:12 that he's talking to Jews about Gentiles. That actually isn't as obvious as it seems because Paul writes to Gentile Christians and refers to unbelievers generically as Gentiles. So Paul's writing to Gentiles and he talks about the Gentiles but he defines the word Gentiles in those situations and he uses it in those situations to refer generically to unbelievers. Here are two examples. Ephesians 4:17 says, 'now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility their minds.'

His point is don't live like the unbelievers. 1 Thessalonians 4, another Gentile church, 'finally then brothers we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that as you receive from us how you ought to walk and to please God just as you're doing that you do so more and more for you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus for this is the will of God your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual morality and that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles, who do not know God.' So here are two very clear references where Gentile language is used not because Paul was writing to Jews. Gentile language is used to refer generically to unbelievers. And so scholars naturally asked the question, well, given the fact that the dispersion included

Gentiles by definition, after they became believers after Pentecost, is it reasonable to think that Peter could be using Gentile in 1 Peter 2:12 the same way Paul does just refer to unbelievers? Is that a reasonable assumption? Well, to a lot of scholars, yeah, that's a perfectly reasonable assumption and that's why many scholars look at 1 Peter, it's grouped in the general epistles for a reason as well.

But a lot of scholars look at 1 Peter and say the audience is mixed. Peter is addressing a mixed audience. He's addressing believers, not just Jewish believers, but believers, some of whom are Gentiles, too. So again, to wrap it up, this sort of thinking, using the language of exile and the language of the people of God versus the Gentiles generically as an analogy for this circumcision neutral thing we call the church does happen in the New Testament. So believers, regardless of whether they're ethnic Jew or Gentiles, can be spoken of with language appropriated from the Old Testament people of God. So there you go, the Old Testament is our context.

The language can be appropriated from the Old Testament, people of God, and unbelievers can therefore be cast as unbelieving Gentiles of the Old Testament. So the word Gentile become sort of a catchall term. That's all understandable. It's understandable why a New Testament writer would do that, and we had two clear examples from Paul where he uses the term Gentile very generically. It's very clear those two that I gave you. So I don't think your friend is correct that 1 Peter is just written to Jews.

TS: The next question is from Jonas in Denmark. He's actually got two questions. First question has got a few questions sprinkled in there. Mike talks a lot about God reclaiming the nations to reverse what happened in Deuteronomy 32. Could you please define what it will take in order for a nation to be reclaimed? Will any nation ever be reclaimed before the second coming? Can once predominantly Christian and Western nations be reclaimed by the sons of God if there is a great falling away? Does God still think in terms of reclaiming nations or will only a remnant of believers within each nation be reclaimed, saved, kind of like the new Exodus perspective?

MSH: Yeah, the Exodus perspective is useful here. What I mean, what I'm referring to is the extraction from all nations of believers, of family members of the family of God, those who forsake all other gods, all other ways of salvation, and align themselves with the God of Israel who is incarnate in Jesus. So think of it this way. The advance of God's kingdom in those nations as more people turn to Christ, the advance of God's kingdom in those nations will progress until the eschaton. So yes, the eschaton, the day of the Lord is a factor here. All of this is going to progress until the eschaton when believers will be put over the nations and thereby finally displacing the fallen sons of God thereby reclaiming that nation but in the context of the final global Edenic kingdom. So the new Exodus perspective is I think useful there and this is ultimately an eschatological thing. But, again, when I use this language, I'm referring to the extraction from all nations of members of the family of God and the progression of the kingdom of God toward the eschaton.

TS: Jonas' second question is, can Mike explain the connection, if any, between the sons of God and the deities of various pagan religions? Are Horus, Zeus, Marduke, etc. real divine beings or entity/sons of God if they are/were real, where are they now, Tartarus?

MSH: Well, I think they are real divine beings. The names given to them are really, they typically derive from perceived attributes or attributes that are assigned to them by people or geography or some other natural phenomena or something like that. People give divine entities they perceive are real, and I would say for good reason. They give them names and the names are based on the way people want to order the relationships between the beings and what they do, what they're perceived to do, what powers they're perceived to have. A lot of this is assigned by people to these entities so we don't have like an ID list. We don't have an attribute list given in a biblical theology or Scripture that would help us say, oh, this one is that name and this other one here is this one.

We don't have anything like that. What we do we have an affirmation that a supernatural world is real and that it relates to people and in the biblical case, Yahweh is the one who reveals his name to the Israelites. We don't really have a statement that that's what happened with all the other ones. So typically what happens is that people, people groups, assigned names to the deities, the divinities, whatever level of the entity in the divine hierarchy that they perceive and adhere to and worship and so on so forth. Those names are in that sense manufactured but the sort of manufacturable methodology here of how certain divine beings are assigned names doesn't mean that they aren't real. It just means the people are the ones that are writing about them in assigning certain attributes, names, abilities, likes, dislikes, and even relationships, like family relationships, between gods and goddesses and stuff like that. That is something that just derives from a given culture.

Another thing I would add to this is the sons of God is just a term that denotes divine beings with high rank or decision-making ranking in biblical thinking. How other cultures would have perceived that is going to vary by culture but there's still this sense that these beings are real. They're out there. They affect us. They impact our lives and then giving them names and relationships helps the culture sort of order those things in their own minds at least for worship and adoration and sacrifice and those sorts of things. Tartarus was mentioned where they now. The only beings that are assigned to Tartarus in the Judeo-Christian tradition are the original offending sons of God, in other words the villains, the rebels of Genesis 6:1-4. Those are the only ones that are said to be in Tartarus in an imprisoned sense anyway. Now Tartarus is one of the words for the underworld, the realm of the dead. Apparently, the point is that these particular rebels are in prisons.

They can't come and go out of the underworld like other inhabitants of the underworld can, according to biblical descriptions anyway. So the idea is that these specific offenders are in some way prevented from interacting with humanity in until, again, this isn't unique to me. I would say until Revelation 9. Revelation 9 is it marks the release of the watchers for a short time until their destruction in the day of the Lord and then the judgements that we read about in the later chapters of a Revelation.

TS: Our next question is from Brian. How do you view books like Ester, Ecclesiastes, or Philemon in terms of inspiration and canonicity? What about Judith in comparison to Esther? Why wasn't Judith included?

MSH: Well, I don't know of any coherent reason to deny canonicity to any of these books, Ecclesiastes for the first question, Ester Ecclesiastes and Philemon. Ecclesiastes was questioned because of its pessimism but I am of the opinion that the book is also optimistic, and lots of

scholars are. At any rate, it's wisdom literature. It's designed to teach life lessons and some life lessons revolve around bad stuff that happens. They revolve around despair, poor decisions we make, self-destructive behavior that can twist a person's thinking. That's just life and that's what wisdom literature is about.

So I don't see anything inherently difficult or an inherent reason to reject Ecclesiastes, even though it was naturally to be because some of the things are in it. Ester doesn't mention the name of God specifically. I think it is encrypted. There is something to that idea but who cares? Who cares if it's not, if it doesn't contain the name of God? Is there some rule that says a book has to contain the name of God to be inspired? Well, I'm not aware of that rule if there is one basically because there isn't. Philemon, because it mentions slavery, well, lots of other books mention slavery. I don't really see a good reason to not consider these inspired and canonical and go along with that.

Judith was mentioned specifically in comparison to Ester but Judith, for those who don't know, is a story about another Jewish heroine figure. So why wasn't that one included in the canon? Judith actually was part of the Alexandrian canon, that is, the Septuagint canon that the early Church inherited. In the early church their Bible was the Septuagint. That's why prior to the Reformation, that's why we have these other books that we associate with the Catholic Church incorrectly because there was no Catholic Church for a few centuries after the early church era. Now the reason these books were considered canonical was because they were included in the Septuagint, which was the Bible of the early church. That's just the way it was.

Now the Jewish community that operated in parallel to the early church, the Jewish community obviously rejected the New Testament as canonical and it also rejected the Septuagint and its collection as authoritative. The Jewish canon was limited to the books that we as Protestants have in our Old Testament. So when you hit the Reformation, one of the things that reformers did was they lopped off the books that were not in the Jewish canon, the Jewish collection, also known as the Palestinian canon. They lopped off the books that weren't in there, the rationale not specifically being we don't want to do what the Catholics do. I'm sure there were some that thought that way but the rationale was for our Old Testament, let's accept the books that the Israelites would have had, just the Israelites before there was a Septuagint, that kind of thing.

What were the books they accepted, and so that became the Protestant canon. And that is what evangelicals are familiar with now. So it depends what you're talking about as far as the canon as to whether Judith was accepted or not. Now, I'm going to read a little snippet here from Anchor Bible Dictionary about Judith and this might help explain a little bit why this wasn't accepted in the Jewish canon, so here's a little quote. The writer says,

“There is no evidence that in Palestine Judith was ever regarded as canonical. Evidently it was not used by the Essenes at Qumran, or at least no trace of it has been found there among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The rabbis at Jamnia who established the canon of the Hebrew Bible around A.D. 90 may have rejected the book because, contrary to the prohibition in Deut 23:3, Achior, an *Ammonite*, was accepted into the Jewish religion

MSH: According to Deuteronomy 23:3, at least the rabbis reading in that verse, that was something cannot happen. So since that is part of the book of Judith, the reasoning goes well, maybe this is why they just felt that we can't accept Judith. And I think personally, it probably had to do with the bigger issue of its associate with the Septuagint, which is the Bible of those wacky Christians over there. But be that as it may, this is probably the thinking of the way some people. You can't have an Ammonite accepted into the Jewish faith. That's how they read Deuteronomy 23:3 whether we agree with that or not, that could have been their reading.

TS: The next question is from Will. Several Old Testament books referred to at least two versions of the Torah, one originating out of the Aaronic priesthood and the other out of the mosaic priestly tradition. For example, Genesis 1 is said to come from the Mosaic tradition and Genesis 2 basically repeating chapter 1 but with more of a theological and anthropological emphasis from the Aaronic tradition. I know it can get a lot more complex than this within the full documentary hypothesis that many evangelical commentators today say has been thoroughly debunked. But it still comes out in new books. Is there any merit to the two tradition thesis?

MSH: Well this is sort of a yes and no. I've never heard of this mosaic versus Aaronic tradition as an explanation for the differences between Genesis 1 and 2. Frankly, that sounds like a popular argument to me, sort of maybe a way to cheat and try to link Genesis 1 and 2 with both Aaron and Moses. I've never seen that. I don't know any scholar that argues along that trajectory. So if anybody out there knows of this in some publication, let me know. Let me qualify what I just said by saying this. I mean a peer-reviewed publication. I don't mean something on somebody's website. I want some basis for this that is scholars have looked at and said, yeah, there might be something to that idea. I just never heard of it. Now, so I don't buy that. I would also say that JEDP, the documentary hypothesis has not been thoroughly debunked.

This is a popular myth in conservative evangelicalism. JEDP is still to this day gets argued over by scholars, both critical scholars, non-confessional scholars, unbelievers, however you want to characterize that, and evangelicals. There are people who still fight over JEDP but that's a whole lot different than saying it's been thoroughly debunked. You might be thinking about books like Josh McDowell and that kind of thing. The material he has in those books does not debunk JEDP. Literary criticism did not debunk JEDP. Literary critics today, that's just a different method of source criticism. Literary critics today who are non-confessional also embrace JEDP. This is sort of a false dichotomy that circulates through the evangelical community, now having said that this is still the mainstream view of the origins the Pentateuch. It still getting argued but it's still being critiqued, it's still being tweaked, and debated. But only super conservative evangelicals and super ultra-Orthodox Jews reject the notion of sources entirely.

They're the only ones who do that and I think based on a flawed presupposition that the phrase 'law of Moses' has to mean the law that originated with Moses or the law that came from Moses, just a simple Hebrew construct phrase. It could just as well mean the law associated with Moses or the law about Moses or something like that. It's not necessary to take law of Moses as Moses wrote every syllable of the Torah, it just isn't, even though that's the traditional perspective or at least with the ultraconservative, either evangelical or the Jewish community.

Now me personally, I think there is something to the source hypothesis idea. And what I mean by that is I am what used to be called a supplementarian, that is, I think that there is a substantial mosaic core that either I don't see any reason why Moses wasn't real or could've written stuff.

So I think this mosaic was either produced by Moses himself or Moses taught the material and it was transmitted through oral tradition and written down later after Moses died. It's still Moses stuff. There is, I think, a substantial mosaic core but I also believe that that mosaic core was added to over time by other prophetic figures, other people that God prompted to do that, other people that God led to produce Scripture. You realize that most of the books in your Old Testament don't even have named authors, period. The named authors that tradition assigns them are, guess what, just that, tradition. There is nothing in the text that identifies authors for most of these books. And so there's no harm in saying some of those authors that aren't named actually could have added something to the Pentateuch.

If they can write something over here, why can't they add something over there? We have a lot of these myths about Scripture in the evangelical community that are just passed down. It was usually in response to something that we don't like, like higher criticism. The real problem with higher criticism isn't that you have sources and things like that. The real problem is that initially it got married to an evolutionary view of Israelite religion written by a guy named Julius Wellhausen. So Wellhausen was the guy who married his ideas to the documentary hypothesis and that's where we get JEDP in its sort of classic form. I realize I'm getting too far afield here but I would say two traditions in these chapters are possible but two traditions don't invalidate the idea that one tradition is sort of an amplification of the other.

The way evangelicals usually explain this is Genesis 1 and 2 are written by the same person, and Genesis 2 is just sort of a telescoping a further look at Genesis 1 with more detail. Well, that could be true and still have them written by different authors. It doesn't really solve anything. They can still be written by two different hands or one hand. So I think it's possible. I don't have any problem with that but I'm what used to be called a supplementarian. I'm not a JEDPer. I think a lot of it is based on circular reasoning. But I think the ultra-orthodox conservative view can quickly become absurd. So I am not there either.

TS: Next one's from Jack. On various podcasts and video presentations, I've often heard Mike mention the Babel Deuteronomy 32 event as the Romans 1 event of the Old Testament. But I've never heard him say that he thinks are the details of the Romans 1 event of the New Testament. Is God's giving over of people to do what ought not be done a reference to some particular moment in the first century. If so, where can I find the details of that event? Otherwise, is there anything in the text anywhere that should keep us from understanding Romans 1 as being a reference back to the Deuteronomy 32 event, the consequences of which were still in play at the time of Paul's writing.

MSH: Yeah, I don't think there's anything specific in the first century that Paul is referring to, and I'm also not using this language to say that there's a specific textual link between Romans 1 and Deuteronomy 32. What I'm referring to when I say that the Babel event was sort of like the Romans 1 event of the Old Testament is the broad idea of God giving people up to their own devices and their own self will, essentially letting them make this decision, in Babel's case, of course, to build the tower and not obey the command to disperse, that God lets them do what

they want to do, He surrenders people to their rejection of what God wanted them to do and lets the results ensue, and in the case of Babel, actually judges it more directly. So that's all I'm referring to. I'm not referring to any specific textual link.

TS: The next one is from Wheeler. I wonder if Malachi working and writing in post exilic Judah is playing off the Genesis 6 narrative. At the beginning of the tannoch in Genesis 6, the Elohim defined themselves among the daughters of men marrying. At the end of the Greek Bible, Yahweh's nation, now Judah, has defiled itself and the holy things of Yahweh with the daughter of El. He has married the daughter of a foreign God whereas the sons of God took Yahweh's nation. In the former, they were the prey of divine beings. In the latter, they were willful and treacherous.

MSH: This is what I would call some pretty creative exegesis that the rabbis would've really liked. But I have to say I tend to doubt all that. I'm going to have to unpack this a little bit now. I don't see any clear connection from this passage, in Malachi here back to Genesis 6. Now the question mentioned the sons of God took and that's terminology that appears in Genesis 6 but Yahweh's nation marrying in Malachi, the lemma there is different, Ba'al. That word does not occur in Genesis 6. So what I mean, what I'm trying to get to here is if that lemma Ba'al would have occurred in Genesis 6, I think then you have a tighter connection between Malachi and Genesis 6. You'd at least have some connection, let's put it that way. Right now you have two different words.

So if the writer of Malachi wanted readers to think of Genesis 6, the propensity would be to use the same terminology to create these textual connections for someone who was reading the material in the original language. But that isn't what we have here. So I tend to doubt that this is the point of the Malachi passage, that it's not some reference back to Genesis 6 and divine beings and that sort of thing. Another problem is the daughters in Genesis 6 were the daughters of men. I follow the role reversal idea behind the question. We've got sort of characters acting out this way and maybe their roles are reversed, I understand that. But I would still like to see a specific textual link between the two. So if Ba'al were in Genesis 6, that would be interesting because that would be designed to take our minds back there. It seems more likely to me that this is just another instance of spiritual adultery, that motif which is used a lot in the Old Testament, in other words, using marital relations as an analogy for God's relationship to Israel and therefore spiritual betrayal being cast in terms of sexual betrayal. I think that's more likely that a specific link back to Genesis 6.

TS: The last question is from Joel. Would Dr. Heiser be able to comment on Douglas Campbell's work on Romans claiming that Paul was writing Romans as a diatribe?

MSH: Well, I really can't because I haven't read Campbell's work so I'll have to defer to scholars who have a good grasp of classical period Literary genres for this one. Now I did look this up. Schreiner, in his Romans commentary, says, "There is also general agreement that Paul uses a diatribe style in Romans," and he quotes Campbell so Schreiner's a very mainstream scholar, a good scholar. So I'm perfectly fine with saying, well, if Schreiner, who's trained in New Testament understands classical literary genres, if he sees validity to this then I'm willing to buy that.

Now for those who don't know quite what we're talking about here, there's another quotation from Schreiner that I'll just read so the people know really what the question is about. Schreiner writes on page 105, he says, "Scholars generally agree that Paul uses a diatribe style in Romans 2. Scowers, a different scholar, claims that Paul borrowed the diatribe from the philosophical schools, which employed it as a pedagogical device. Perhaps the diatribe was borrowed from the philosophical schools but Paul probably adapted the form to suit his preaching of the gospel in synagogues." Now here's what diatribe means, a characteristic of the diatribe includes dialogue with an imaginary opponent in which one anticipates possible objections to one's argument. Just hearing that, you can well see that Paul does that a lot in Romans.

He anticipates questions and sort of has this shadow debate with an opponent. He does that a lot so it's very easy to see that. Schreiner continues, "in this chapter, Paul demolishes the claim that the possession of the law or circumcision constitutes a covenantal advantage for Jews. Rhetorical questions typical of the diatribe are employed throughout to drive the reader to the desired conclusions." This is something from I believe Romans 3 or 4. I can't remember exactly what passage I took this out of. It's on page 105 of Schreiner. So yeah, I mean, as a technique, this idea of anticipating questions and then putting them out there then answering the questions that you anticipate, and so on and so forth. That becomes part of your rhetorical strategy, sure. It's very easy for me to see that that makes sense in terms of the way Paul writes.