

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

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"Q&A 6"

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With

**Residential Layman
Trey Stricklin**

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TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 70, Q&A 6. 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, back from Missouri and in the routine for a little while and just feels good to be in the routine. I like routine. What can I say?

TS: How did Missouri go?

MSH: I thought it went really well. It was a lot of fun. I did the thing at the university and I also went to film Skywatch TV. Some listeners will be familiar with that, and I spent some time with Tom Horn, and Derek and Sharon Gilbert. That was a lot of fun.

TS: Awesome, well, great. We've got about probably 6 or 7 questions so why don't we just dive right into the questions Mike?

MSH: Sounds good.

TS: And our first one's from Matthew and he wants to know is there a link between the reconstituted Divine Council of glorified believers in the Catholic understanding of the intercession of the saints?

MSH: This is actually a good question. If you think of Hebrews 12, Hebrews 12:1, we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, I tend to think that ideas like that, the cloud of witnesses and some other things I'll mentioned here in a minute, are glorified believers or at least include glorified believers. And that sort of takes us into this idea of intercession indirectly. What I mean by that is if you look at this concept of the cloud of witnesses and that they are actually glorified believers, they're not just angels, I think that's coherent because the witnesses, cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 12, is linked back to the preceding chapter. I mean chapter 12:1 says therefore, since we're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, well what's he talking about?

He's talking about Hebrews 11, the so-called Hall of Faith. And everybody in the Hall of Fame are people. They're not angels. They're not divine beings. So in some sense, these people who are glorified are the witnesses that the writer of the book of Hebrews is talking about here. Now you get other ideas like that in the book of Revelation. John sees the elders. They're cast as people offering the prayers of God's people up to God. That's Revelation 5, around verse 8. Angels also apparently intercede for people so it's not always just glorified believers that have some sort of intercessory role for the people down here. You can also get this with angels, Revelation 8, Matthew 18:10 conveys that sort of idea. But if you're listening, you're thinking what, that doesn't really sound like intercession of the saints, that idea. And I would agree with that.

There's nothing specifically said in Hebrews 12, for instance, about the cloud of witnesses making intercession. It is implied Revelation 5 and Revelation 8, Matthew 18 and a few other places. So the idea, even though it's not immediately in Hebrews 12, the cloud of witnesses idea,

it is sort of hinted at elsewhere. But none of that is really endorsing the Catholic articulation of the idea the intercession of saints because that idea in Catholic theology is linked with the flawed notion of the redistribution of merit. So the Catholic idea that you pray to the saints why? Because the saints are going to have something to do with either bolstering you're merit, giving you merit, giving you some of their merit in relationship to salvation and the idea of meriting salvation whether through your own works or somebody else's works that are sort of stored up and then they have some to share I think is patently unbiblical. Having said that though, this idea of this intercession, this sort of thing going on, that I do think is biblical and it is part of this Divine Council thinking.

Now I want to try to sort of lay this out a little bit without getting into too much detail but the cloud language is interesting. And this intercession idea from like Revelation 5 is interesting because of some things in the Old Testament that have to do with the Divine Council, the heavenly throne room idea. For Instance, in Psalm 89:38, we have a reference to the witness in the clouds who ratifies or approves the Davidic Covenant. Now a number of scholars have addressed this and have you seen this language and commented on it. If you've contributed to the Divine Council bibliography, I'll give you a heads up here when that is eventually made available to you.

There are two articles, one by Theodore Mullen who does a lot of work on the Divine Council and another one, the last of the author I Veijola, V E I J O L A. they both take the witness of the clouds as being a divine Council member and you can read those articles to figure out why. It really, sort of the quick version here is in ancient covenants, Psalm 89 is the Davidic Covenant, in ancient covenants the gods of the Council were often called on as witnesses and they are described either as heavenly ones or as gods or you'll actually see cloud language show up in some of these covenant treaties. So Mullen and Veijola are looking back on this kind of language and saying, doing some exegesis in the text as well, saying that this language points us in the direction of the witness in the clouds being a Divine Council member.

Now Veijola actually argues in his article that the witness is Yahweh himself, witnessing his own covenant valid, being a witness of the testimony, of validation to his own covenant. And that actually opens up the whole two Yahweh's idea that I talk a lot about in the Unseen Realm and others places on my blog. So it's kind of interesting that you have this sort of language. Now the other passage I would refer people to would be Job 16, Job 16:19, for this idea of intercession for believers that happens in the clouds, i.e. in the divine throne room, in the place of the Divine Council. Job 16:19-21 says this, just listen closely. Job says,

¹⁹ Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
and he who testifies for me is on high.

²⁰ My friends scorn me;
my eye pours out tears to God,

²¹ that he would argue the case of a man with God,
as a son of man does with his neighbor.

MSH: So it's this reference to some sort of witness, some sort of advocate in the heavens, in the clouds, in the presence of God, in other words, in the Divine Council for believers right now. It's kind of interesting. That in turn helps us or encourages us to think maybe little bit differently about the advocate language in 1 John used about Jesus. And that takes us mentally back in the

book of Hebrews 2, though, when believers are presented to the “congregation”, to the Council where there's this sort of scene where Jesus identifies with us, these are the children that you've given me, and he introduces us to God and God to us and that sort of thing, to the congregation, not just God but to the congregation, to the whole Council.

I talk about that in the Unseen Realm as well. So I would say, yeah, this idea that believers who are glorified replace or reconstitute the Divine Council, that that does relate in some way. It plays a part. It helps inform more fully this idea of intercession of someone in the Council with people right here on Earth, saints, holy ones, believers, right here on Earth.

TS: Okay, the next question is from Greg. You briefly discussed magic in one of the podcast on Acts. How does real magic actually work? How did the magicians in Egypt duplicate some of the works Moses did? What about the Ephesian magicians or even magic today? Do they recite incantations calling on demonic powers who perform the actual miracles? What is a Christian's response when we encounter something like this?

MSH: I would suggest that the only coherent response to this is that hostile divine beings do indeed have real powers. Now while you can say, frankly without any real proof, that the Egyptian magicians in the story of Moses confrontation with Pharaoh were doing just tricks, human tricks, like stage magic. You could say that, but there's no actual proof in the passage to say that's all it was. Well, you can sort of go there. It's a little harder to do the same thing with the mentions of magic in the book of Acts, Acts 8:9-11, Acts 13, Acts 19:19, those contexts clearly link the references to magic to contact with or worship of other divine powers, powers of darkness, and several of those are in the context of Paul's ministry in Ephesus.

Now if you actually go to some of these passages and you look up the Greek term behind magic used in them, the term there is *magia*. It's easy to see where we get our word magic from that. And BDAG (Bauer, Danker, Arndt & Gingrich) note that this term refers to a rite or rites, R I T E S, ordinarily using incantations designed to influence or control transcendent powers. So in the Greco-Roman world, the classical world, Greek language would've been the dominant language, you'd have this term used of, specifically the use of incantations to contact or influence to control or manipulate or barter with some divine power, some entity. I want to just pull up here briefly Clint Arnold's Ephesians commentary.

Now Clinton Arnold is an evangelical New Testament scholar and he's probably done the most work, certainly in the evangelical orbit but arguably he's a sort of one of the top 10 guys just in academia who have done a lot of work related to this question of magic. And in his Ephesians commentary, he says this. I'm going to quote from this and it's going to be a long quotation but I think you'll find it interesting. He says, he's commenting here on the image of Artemis, which is Diana of the Ephesians. Remember Acts 19:19, great is Diana of the Ephesians or maybe your English translation actually uses the term Artemis. If you've ever seen a picture of Diana or Artemis, it's this feminine goddess figure that looks like she has 100 breasts, and so this is what Arnold is commenting on. They're not actually breasts. They're something else so here's what he says.

“The meaning of the row of bulbous objects on the chest of Artemis has proved a mystery to interpreters. Some early Christian interpreters identify them as female breasts and saw this as an expression of a fertility motif.

This interpretation has not been generally accepted because the differences in shape. **[MSH: If you actually take a close look at them]** Numerous other ideas have been suggested such as eggs, grapes, nuts, and even testicles. The latter view has a number of prominent adherents because in some ancient religions, mutilated body parts were attached to the cultic image of the deity. The most convincing explanation yet has recently been offered by a scholar named Sarah Morris who teaches at UCLA who concludes that the bulbous objects are comparable to leather goatskin patches called *kursa*. These are known from Hittite magical practices. These little bags were filled with magical material and used as fetish objects. She observes that the Hittite deities associated with the *kursa* were often associated with protecting people and places and were frequently invoked in oaths and called upon in magical rites. She suggested an ancient Anatolian cult image at Ephesus, to which rose of such bags were attached, was the predecessor to the image of the Ephesian Artemis. As such, the bags function as symbols for fecundity spiritual power and protection. The bags may also provide a clue into understanding ancient testimony about magical words. **[MSH: Arnold is going to reference something here called the Ephesian letters]** that were said to be inscribed on the cultic image of Artemis. **[MSH: This is not a biblical text. This is going to be Greco-Roman pagan texts that scholars refer to as the Ephesian letters. So continuing with Arnold, he says,]** Morris believes that these magical words which were used in spells and incantations “could derive from Hittite phrases carried down over the centuries.” According to Anaxilas, **[MSH: which is an ancient text]** the Ephesian letters were contained in little sewed bags which Morris thinks might be explained by the *kursa*. By this she suggested not only did the Ephesian letters have an ancient pedigree in Anatolian **[MSH: that is Hittite]** magical practices, but they may have been contained in the little bulbous sacks attached to the cultic image of the Ephesian goddess Artemis. According to Luke **[MSH: We’re back in the biblical material now, this is Arnold still commenting]** according to Luke, many people who are devotees of this cult became Christians during Paul’s ministry there. In fact, so many people were turning to Christ that it was beginning to have an adverse impact on the sales of silver shrines to the goddess. This is what led to the guild of the silversmiths raising the alarm that caused the mob uprising in the theater. **[MSH: in Acts 19; that’s page 21 from Arnold’s commentary. I’m going to skip over to page 31 now, he says,]** One of the dramatic incidents that Luke narrates about Paul’s ministry in the city involves a failed exorcism attempt by an itinerant Jewish exorcist and priest named Sceva. **[MSH: We talked about him in a previous podcast]** When Sceva and his sons attempted to add the name of Jesus to their exorcistic formula, the demonized man responded violently and the group was injured. According to Luke, this prompted a great fear and conviction within the believing community and they brought out the magical texts they still possessed and burned them. In

Luke's estimation, the value of the texts that went up in flames that day was the equivalent of 50,000 days' wages. It is not at all surprising that this event happened in Ephesus, although it probably could've taken place in any city of the Roman Empire. Ephesus, though, had a reputation in antiquity as a place where magical practices flourished."

MSH: Now Arnold is going to refer to another book that he has written. What I'm going to do is some of these texts I can provide for you on the website with this episode of the podcast, but the first one here, that little statement about how Ephesus was a place where magical practices flourished that, comes from Arnold's book, scholarly book called *Ephesians Power and Magic*. It's kind of an expensive book but if you can get it, I highly recommend it. Arnold continues here in two sources I'm going to post for you. He says,

"The practice of magic was predicated on a worldview that recognized the widespread presence and influence of good and evil spirit powers on every area of life. Magic represented a means of harnessing spiritual power and managing life's issues through rituals, incantations, and invocations. Our knowledge of the phenomena of magic has been facilitated greatly by the discovery of nearly 250 magical papyri in the sands of Egypt. These illustrate the kinds of rituals, spells, formulae, recipes for amulets, curses, and all the rest of the phenomenon that characterized Roman-era magical practices and techniques. The extant texts have been translated into English and are made available in a volume called 'The Greek Magical Papyrus in Translation.' In addition to these texts are numerous other witnesses to magic that include literary references to magical practices", so on so forth.

MSH: Now I'm going to attach two sources that the questioner or anyone else interested in this topic can read. One is Arnold's article on 'Magic in the Dictionary of Paul and his Letters,' and the other one is, also the author is Arnold, his article on *The Magical Papyri* that I just read about from his source in the dictionary of New Testament background. So what we can conclude from all this is that these references to magic are not just stage tricks. They were associated both in the New Testament text and also in texts outside the New Testament in Greco-Roman paganism with doing things, either uttering an incantation, making a little object, making a little spell or potion or whatnot to facilitate contact with demonic powers, with supernatural entities to cajole them or barter with them to do something on your behalf.

So I don't know how we can just to sort of take these references in the Bible and just say oh, they were just doing a soft shoe with the hat and the cane and the little stage tricks that people probably can figure out or just knew what they were doing. That isn't the way they're presented. And so does the magic really work? Well, if spiritual powers, demonic powers are paying attention, we'll just put it that way, to solicitation, the answer would be yes. They actually were approachable through these means. Now this takes me mentally back, I'm not going to get into this very long but a few years ago, actually it was about 10 years ago, I went to hear a paper at an SBL meeting, Society of Biblical Literature, a regional meeting, where a guy named Jordan Paper, a professor in the Northwest, was giving a paper.

I had read Paper's book on polytheism called *The Gods Are Many*. Jordan paper is a practicing polytheist. He's retired now from teaching but I still see him from time to time at SBL meetings. I know what he looks like. He's a practicing polytheist and he was very transparent about his "faith". This is a scholarly meeting. He's not holding anything back here. He says basically this only works if you solicit this kind of contact. It doesn't just happen. You have to want it and you have to do things to solicit it and the powers, he would use these terms, the powers, the gods, the spirits will respond if you are open to their contact, to what they can do for you. And this was his faith.

This is something he lived out every day, and he just presented it like it was normative to a room full of scholars. And, of course, everybody clapped nicely at the end. It just made me think if you presented something that would've been evangelistic about Jesus, they probably would have asked you not to come back. But the polytheism was okay. But this whole idea is still around today and it sort of by those who are involved in it, it still works the same way. So I don't know on what basis we would look back at ancient texts and say this is just a lot of hokum. I think there's more to it than that.

TS: The next one's from Michael. The ESV version of Matthew 24:15-16 says, 'so when you see the abomination of desolation spoken by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place, let the reader understand and let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.' And Michael's question is, does the language indicate that the holy place here is a physical temple or something else? Michael really doesn't care if it's a physical Temple or not. He wants to follow the correct logic path no the matter where it leads.

The point of his question is if the term holy place is referring to a physical temple then a) doesn't that contradict the idea that the most high God doesn't live in a temple anymore but in us? b) isn't the reinstitution of animal sacrifices an abomination to Christ or c) the most important question for Michael, if the holy place is indeed a physical temple is not really holy because God doesn't live there and is in fact an abomination, does the language indicate that the holy place is only holy because of a past precedent? In other words, they consider it holy at the same time so Jesus put it in terms that they could understand? It begs the question, is the temple holy or not?

MSH: There's a lot here. The notion about there being a contradiction, I would say that the verse, if you actually go back to Matthew 24:15-16, look at the verse. It doesn't actually say God was living in the temple. It basically suggests only that the temple was considered sacred. In other words, for Jews, they sort of presumed that the presence is there or at least the divine presence of the Old Testament is doing something with the temple. It's a sacred thing and that's kind of normal a Jew would think that. Jesus is speaking to a Jewish audience. This is the book of Matthew which is very Jewish in its flavoring, in its context. So Jesus is speaking to a Jewish audience prior to Pentecost.

If the context, some would associate the temple as being, maybe holding some sort of idolatrous object in terms of Matthew 24. That's a poor way of putting it this way. If you look at Matthew 24 and you assume that this is describing an end times event that's connected with Daniel 9, the abomination, some people will assume that there's going to be an idol put into this temple because prior to Jesus' time in the intertestamental period, Second Temple period, this is what happened with Antiochus Epiphanies when he outlawed things like circumcision on the

Sabbath and he wanted to sacrifice a pig on the alter and put an idol in the temple. Those who look at Matthew 24 and project out into the far future essentially are looking for some sort of mimicking of this.

But the temple during the time of Jesus isn't going to be looked at that way because that's why during the intertestamental period, we had all the Maccabean wars. They were basically started this rebellion, started by Antiochus' abomination, and the temple was cleansed and so-and-so forth. So a Jew living in Jesus' day isn't going to be looking at the temple, their temple that way. So when Jesus is actually talking, the immediate context would be the first century and Jews would've considered that temple sacred. But that's a little far afield. The verse itself makes no theological claim that the Spirit of God is living there in contradiction to what Paul is going to say after Pentecost. It just doesn't say that but the Jew who's not a Christian and this is pre-Pentecost. A Jew is sort of going to assume that. And then after Pentecost is when you get this language about the Spirit of God indwelling believers. So I understand that part of the question but it feels little misplaced because it's not specific to the pre-post-Pentecost issue. The second element he says isn't the reinstatement of animal sacrifices an abomination to Christ. Well, yeah, I would say so.

It would be but Jesus is talking in the first century when he utters Matthew 24 to Jews. So it can't by definition be a reinstatement of animal sacrifices. Now the way the question is worded presupposes two things. One, it presupposes that the questioner is reading the passage in the distant future and so that would be a reinstatement of sacrifices. So it sounds like the questioner presumes the passage is situated in the end times, which of course doesn't need to be the case because when Jesus says it, they're not in the end times. Second, even if it is in the end times, this wouldn't be the millennial temple necessarily but even if you have a temple out there in the future, which a lot of Christians would put in the millennium, and some would just say it's also operating in the tribulation before the millennium without getting into all the end times speculation here.

Even if you put it out in the distant future, then it would still be Jews who are doing the sacrifice. And they wouldn't look at the sacrificing as reinstating sacrifices in the sense that they're trying to denigrate the cross of Christ. They're not thinking about the cross of Christ at all. So if you take Jesus and the cross out of the equation, there's no harm for the Jew getting to sacrifice again because that's going to be something central because they're looking back at Old Testament theology. So Jesus isn't even in the picture. You only get this problem when you're a Christian and you attach forgiveness and atonement to the work of Christ on the cross. This is sort of a classic problem with the those who want to affirm a pre-millennial system of eschatology and they look back at Ezekiel 40 and 48 about a temple and that naturally begs the question of what about Ezekiel's talk about sacrifices? How can we bring back sacrifices? That would be an abomination because the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus sacrifice was once for all. Yeah, he does.

I would agree with that. I don't take the Ezekiel prophecy in chapters 40 and 48 as being a literal thing, that we should expect a temple to be rebuilt with sacrifices. And there are all sorts of the problems with it. The most obvious just as this one about having to offer sacrifice. I've read all the material on this and the explanation is usually something like well, people just need a visualization. They need an illustration. They need a picture of what Jesus did on the cross. That's just illogical. Why not just hand them a New Testament? This is the way you and I learned about the gospel. I didn't need to see a sacrifice performed so that in my head that

must've been what the cross was about. I'm glad I saw that animal sacrifice so I could understand the gospel. You don't need that to understand the gospel at all. Just hand somebody a New Testament unless you want to argue that there are no New Testaments anymore, that somebody destroys all the Bibles during the tribulation period or something like that, which there is no Bible verse for it. So the whole concept of sacrifices coming back and being a memorial or an illustration or some kind of teaching tool, it just doesn't make any sense. Jews can be saved today.

They don't need a sacrifice to understand the claims of the gospel, the claims of the cross. You also don't need sacrifices to come back for worship. Are we to assume that all people everywhere worshipping God, believers worshipping God today that the worship is somehow not genuine or inadequate because we don't have a temple in Jerusalem anymore? It just doesn't make sense on all sorts of levels. So I see that sort of thinking kind of lurking behind the question so I would say yeah, it as an abomination to do that as a Christian. But if you're a Jew, you're not thinking about that at all when you looking at Matthew 24 when the Jews were hearing it. The third part I think I didn't quite follow the question. I think there's a little, there's something kind of missing in the question, at least as I recall it. The holy place wasn't a physical temple. It's not really holy because God doesn't live there.

Well, yeah you could sort of say that. That part I think is understandable but the Matthew passage doesn't refer to the temple itself as an abomination so they would've been thinking if you're Jew in the first century, they would've been thinking that God is either somehow residing in the holy of holies or has some attachment to the temple or considers the temple a sacred thing in sacred space and that you would be punished if you committed sacrilege against it or something like that. So in the mind of a Jew, it's going to be holy place. And even the apostles after Pentecost, after the resurrection, after all these key events, they're not looking to profane the space either.

They realize it is a sacred object even though Paul and others are going to say the Spirit of God really dwells in us now in some of the temple language Jesus uses the New Testament about the temple of his body. If you look at how that plays out, Jesus referring to the temple as his own body, well, the body of Christ after Pentecost is believers and that is where the temple, believers corporately and individually are referred to as the temple by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3 and 6 and other places as well. It sort of makes sense to have Jesus being the new temple and his body corporately being the temple and his children individually being the temple as well. This is what the apostles ascribe but that doesn't motivate them to profaning the temple. It is very clear they respected it, but theologically, they're at a different place after Pentecost.

TS: Our next question is from Chris in Australia. Once saved, received Jesus into their heart by praying the sinner's prayer, always saved or is it possible to lose one's salvation for any reason?

MSH: Well, I would say that it's not possible to lose salvation as though you do something and that it's taken away from you or just it sort of leaves you. I do think you can turn your back on salvation though. Part of the problem is really, and I'm not accusing Chris in Australia of this. Part of the problem if you think about the way the question is worded, receiving Jesus into their heart by praying the sinner's prayer. The idea of receiving Jesus into your heart, it's really not New Testament language. It's just the way we sort of express the idea of salvation. But we've

kind of turned salvation and conversion, a biblical theology of salvation and conversion into an incantation, into a prayer.

Use the right words and the magic works. You're sort of in. My position I think I could boil down to this statement. If you believe, if you embrace the gospel, if you trust the gospel, if you believe, you are eternally secure. If you don't, you're not. So if you believe you are eternally secure. If you don't believe, you are not eternally secure. What I mean by that is you have to maintain your faith. I'm not talking about works in any way. I think people have heard me enough now in this podcast and other contexts. I understand what the gospel is. It has nothing to do with human merit, zero, nada, zilch, but you have to maintain your faith. In other words, you have to believe. So just like in the Old Testament, you couldn't have a believer like Abraham or David claim election or claim a covenant relationship and then go off and worship Baal.

So now you can't just abandon your faith, choose another god or no God at all, and still claim that you're part of the family of God. In the Old Testament, we had, this takes into the whole context of election, which in the Old Testament I think is fundamentally misunderstood. Election in the Old Testament is not about salvation. It can't be by definition because lots and lots and lots of elect Israelites went off and became apostates and worshiped Baal and other gods. That's why we had the exile. We do not have Baal worshipers in heaven. Baal worshipers are not part of the family of God.

Election was not about salvation. It was about a status whereby you received the truth about the true God and then you had to believe it. That's what election is. Election puts you in a unique position among all the nations to receive the truth about the true God but you still have to believe it, and lots of Israelites didn't. So yes, they had the elect status. They had the covenant, and then they went off and worshiped Baal. Sorry but the Old Testament is quite clear that you will be rejected. You do not worship another god. And it's the same thing in the New Testament but the problem is we turn the doctrine of salvation into an incantation. You can't lose it through any sin for a simple reason.

That which cannot be gained by moral perfection can't be lost by moral imperfection. The issue is believing, you must believe, and we all know that believers, those who profess to believe anyway, turn out to really not believe if they abandon their faith, if they forsake their faith in the God of Israel and Jesus and they go off and they worship something else. They adopt another faith or they don't have any faith at all. The fact that they prayed a prayer, they said certain words at one point in their life doesn't really mean a whole lot. But it's a profession that they made but the question is, do you believe or don't you? If you believe, you are eternally secure. If you don't, you are not eternally secure. There are other reasons why I think this way. If you go to Matthew 10, let me just go there now to sort of set this up. But there's just things that are sort obvious that we kind of miss. Matthew 10 begins this way,

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.² The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;⁴ Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of

the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. ⁹ Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, ¹⁰ no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. ¹¹ And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. ¹² As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³ And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. ¹⁵ Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

MSH: Now I'd say, he's saying this to the disciples. I would say that the disciples were believers but he's treating it seriously saying if you deny me, if you leave the faith, if you turn to another God or no God at all, the Father is not going to say, hey, good to see you. Glad to see you. You prayed a prayer. You said the right words at some point in your life. The question is do you believe or don't you, not did you use an incantation at some point in your life? And he says to the disciples, it is kind of shocking but there it is. Now probably at this point, there are going to be people in the audience who are thinking of language like when Paul talks about being sealed the Holy Spirit on the day of redemption.

That idea means that the Spirit, the presence of the Spirit, indwelling believers, is the validation or evidence of salvation. It doesn't mean that you no longer have to believe. It doesn't mean that continued faith is now optional. Sealing means you were marked by the Spirit. You bear the name. You are aligning yourself with the gospel, with Jesus. Think about what Paul says in other places. Paul, the same guy who wrote about sealing of the Spirit, and I'm saying look, the sealing of the Spirit language doesn't give you permission to not believe anymore. You're sealed, you're in. It doesn't really matter if you go off and worship another, yes, it does matter if you abandon the gospel.

You must believe. If you believe, you're eternally secure. If you don't you're not. It doesn't have anything to do with works, doesn't have anything to do with whether you sin or not. We all do. John says, 'if you say you're not a sinner, you're a liar.' All this stuff has nothing to do with works and merit. It has everything to do with what you believe, what your faith is in. Romans 11, here's another one. Paul was writing to Christians, Christians in Rome. And he's talking about Israel and Israel and the Church, this back and forth in Romans 9-11. Well here's Romans 11:20-23. He says,

²⁰ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. [**MSH: In other words, if God forsook Israelites, who went off and apostatized,**

you're going to get the same treatment] ²² Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. ²³ And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.

MSH: Now I don't know how much clearer Paul could be here. He's telling Christians look, you can look at those Jews over there. They're the outsiders now where the Christians, we're the people of God now. And Paul saying look, don't get proud. Fear for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. You must continue to believe. This is why Paul and other New Testament writers constantly talk about remaining steadfast in the faith. Colossians 1:23, I think need to belabor this a little bit because what I'm saying might be controversial, especially in an evangelical context, what people have heard but there's a reason this other stuff is in the New Testament. Paul says in Colossians 1:23,

²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

MSH: Verse 22, you're reconciled if you indeed continue in the faith so on so forth. Paul expects believers to continue because the Spirit is there to help them. But he also knows because he is the same guy who wrote Romans 11, says if you don't continue in your faith, what happened to the Israelites will happen to you. Look at what Colossians 1:23 doesn't say. Paul's saying look, it doesn't say that you're eternally secure if you professed Christ or you prayed a prayer and then you turn away. It says you're eternally secure if you believe the gospel and you remaining steadfast in that belief and you don't turn away. Paul doesn't say you're okay if you don't sin or you're okay if you don't struggle with the flesh. You're okay if you're perfect. That has nothing to do with it.

It's always about continuing in your faith. Salvation never depends on your performance ever. What you couldn't gain by moral perfection, you can't lose by moral imperfection. It's about believing loyalty and that is true across the Testaments. I spent some time in the Unseen Realm talking about this. It's the same thing in the New. Now I should add a few thoughts here. I don't think, for instance, other verses are going to pop into people's heads. I think Paul had every expectation the Spirit would bring believers to the end of the journey. Philippians 2, 'he that began a good work in you will perform unto the day of Jesus Christ.' If you make it to the end, the Spirit had a role in that. The Spirit carried you through. That verse does not give you license to no longer believe is what I'm saying. Hebrew 6, I personally don't think Hebrew 6 teaches that if believers do lapse into unbelief then they can never return. I don't believe that at all. I think that's a misreading of the passage. If you go back and look at Hebrew 6:4-6 it says this. The writer says,

⁴ For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to

repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

MSH: I would say there's nothing in the passage that indicates God would refuse a repentant believer who had lapsed because while we were yet sinners, while we were hostile to God, Paul says elsewhere, God accepted us. He accepted our faith. God wants sinners to believe. John 3:16 doesn't say whoever believes except the ones who once then than didn't might have everlasting life. No, whoever believes God is going to embrace. Now the impossibility I think referred to Hebrew 6 refers to the finality of the work of Jesus on the cross. In other words, that's the only means of salvation for sinners. There is no plan B. The point language of Hebrew 6:4-6 is simply that there is nothing more that God can do to secure salvation for lost sinners. It is impossible to add anything to what Jesus did on the cross. When Jesus said it was finished, he meant it. To add something else to salvation, some plan B, would be to put what Jesus did on the cross to an open shame.

So Hebrew 6 isn't saying it's impossible for someone who lapses to come back to believe. It is possible and God will accept them. What it's saying, it's telling us that those who turn their back on the gospel, they don't have any other hope. There is nothing else that can bring about salvation. The unbeliever must believe in the thing they currently don't believe in. There is no other way. God has nothing else to offer except what happens at the cross. And so we're back to what I said at the beginning. If you believe, you are eternally secure. If you don't believe, you're not. The issue is do you believe or not. Now we all know people at various stages of the journey. They made a profession before. Now they're off being an atheist or off doing this or that. Don't try to parse their experience.

The answer is the same whether you think they were saved or not or not really saved before. The answer's the same. The answer is believe the gospel. To people no matter where they're at, people who've never heard it, people who heard it, once believed it and now they've they turned their back on it. The solution is the same. It's identical. Believe the gospel. If you believe, you will be eternally secure. You will be with the Lord. If you don't, if you turn away from it, you won't be. And this isn't never having a doubt. This is an act of turning to another god or turning to no God at all. This is an act of the will I'm talking about. I'm not talking about ever having a doubt flash through your mind. Everybody has that. What I'm talking about is a decision to turn away voluntarily to worship another god. We do not have Baal worshipers in heaven and we do not have people who don't believe in the gospel in heaven. We don't have people who reject the gospel in heaven is probably a better way of saying it.

TS: Jay in Midland, Texas wants to know how the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4, if it's related to the Divine Council, and he wants to know that because he read the study notes for the Faith Life Study Bible that the translation of the Shema is problematic and that there are five translation options for the verse, thinking that you wrote the study notes got him wondering if possibly the Lord is one is somehow related to Divine Council concepts?

MSH: Yeah, it is. I'm going to quote here from the Unseen Realm for this one. It's going to be on page 339. Page 339 is what I'm talking about the book is where James, the book of James, references the Shema. And so I'll just pick it up on page 339, and then there's going to be a footnote. I'll read the footnotes, so I wrote here,

“Early in our study when I introduced the divine council, I noted that the *shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4, the theological creed of Israel, was worded in such a way that the existence of other gods was not denied (“the Lord *our* God is one”).

MSH: Rabbit trail here, that part’s clear. The reason why there’s five different translation options for Deuteronomy 6:4 is that there are no verbs in the verse. That’s what makes it notoriously difficult. But what is clear is it says the Lord our God is one so that the reality of other God is not denied, and elsewhere in Deuteronomy, they’re actually going to be affirmed; Deuteronomy 4, Deuteronomy 32, all that. Continuing on with what I wrote here,

Paul’s wording in 1 Corinthians 8 has the same feel. In fact, most scholars believe that Paul specifically has the *shema* in mind.

MSH: This is where Paul says, for others, there in many gods, many Lords, but for us, there is one, one Lord, one God and all that stuff. Here’s the footnote. This is footnote number nine on page 339 and it’s a fairly lengthy one but I’m going to read the whole thing.

“James also has the *shema* in view when he writes, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe, and shudder!” (Jas 2:19). Note that James does not say the demons believe in God and therefore tremble. He says that they *believe that God is one*—and that is what frightens them. A fundamental theological point of the *shema* was that God had offered redemption to and through only *one* nation and community: Abraham’s descendants. Israel had been created by supernatural intervention after God had disinherited the nations of the earth (Gen 10) at the Tower of Babel event (Gen 11:1–9). Deut 32:8–9, a passage at which we’ve looked many times in this book, described that disinheritance: “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage” (ESV). After the judgment at the Tower of Babel, God called Abraham (Gen 12:1–3). The two events are juxtaposed back-to-back. When God called Abraham and promised the creation of his “portion,” the nation of Israel, through Abraham and Sarah, he disinherited all other nations, allotting them to other heavenly beings, the sons of God. Those divine beings are elsewhere referred to as the host of heaven, gods (*elohim*), and demons (*shedim*) in Deuteronomy (Deut 4:19–20; 17:3; 29:24–26; 32:17). Old Testament theology puts these “sons of the Most High” (Psa 82:6) under judgment for not ruling justly and seducing the Israelites to worship them instead of the true God (Deut 29:24–26; 32:17; Psa 82). There are two important theological points related to the *shema* that touch on Jas 2:19. First, all the people of the nations under the dominion of lesser *elohim* were outside the plan of salvation. A Jewish follower of Jesus—the audience of the book of James (Jas 1:1–3)—knew and rightly affirmed the *shema*. Their faith in Jesus did

not nullify the creed “The Lord our God is one” since Jesus was the incarnate Yahweh (see chs. 16–18). After the event of the cross, Abraham’s seed was all believers, Jew and Gentile together (Gal 3:26–29). Believing “God is one” was still an expression of faith for a Jewish follower of Jesus that there was only one God who could provide salvation—and he had done just that through the work of Jesus. Second, the rebellious sons of God also knew what the *shema* meant. It reminded them that they were under judgment, sentenced to die like men (Psa 82:6–7; see ch. 30), and forever banished from the presence of the true God. That is what frightens them, not the reality of God’s existence.”

MSH: That’s the end of the footnote. So in other words, the Shema, when the demons know that God is one and that scares them, it scares them because that statement means not only that there is one way of salvation. It also means that God is the God of all the nations. He is the God of all humanity, all the nations, and it's a reminder, the Shema, the Lord our God is one, is a reminder to the demonic powers that what they possess, their dominions, are going to be lost. They are going to be displaced. They are going to be judged. They are going to die like men. They understand that even though it isn't the case now, that everything is sort of subsumed under the God of Israel as was originally intended. They know that ultimately this is where everything is leading. Israel is Yahweh’s portion now.

Yahweh is the God of Israel but ultimately, God will be the God of everything and everyone in the end. And so the fact that the Lord our God is one, even now under these circumstances, even when we have dominion, even when we are free to do what we do in rebellion against him, the idea of the Shema that everything will be subsumed under one God and all people, all divine beings, all nations, are accountable to him. That's what freaks them out. So the Shema, filtered in this case as I've answered the question, filtered through James, is part of the Divine Council worldview. And again in this case, the trajectory I took here. If you are one of the gods who are in rebellion, it frightens you for that reason, because it's a promise. It's not just a statement. It's a promise of things to come as well as an ideal of what should be and that just spells their doom.

TS: Okay Mike, we've got two questions left. I picked two current questions from Margo in Santa Barbara, California just because they relate to one of the recent podcasts, our most popular show to date almost, the Fern and Audrey episode. So her first question, in the NBP number 68, interview with Fern and Audrey, Mike mentioned that one of the reversals in Scripture can be seen in the four women listed in Jesus’ genealogy. The text hints that these four women represent a reversal of Genesis 6:1-4. Can Mike provide more detail?

MSH: There's no short article that I can post on this. There's only a dissertation and I don't know that the dissertation is publicly available, which means that I'm not really authorized to post it. The dissertation is written by a woman named Amy Richter in 2010. The title of her dissertation just tells you all you need to know, The Enochic Watchers Template and the Gospel of Matthew. She's the one who goes through the genealogy showing the connections, the hooks back into the Enoch watchers story and the Genesis 6 story and terminology related to the giants and giant clans that are actually in the genealogy of Jesus through these four women, in other words, through the life circumstances of these four women. I would say though that the best summary of that in really sort of simple pared down terms is actually in my novel, The Portent. That would be chapter 57 of The Portent. The characters are having a discussion about some of, I don't want to give away too much here.

The characters having a discussion in the wake of something they've learned about the birth of Jesus in both astral prophecy and also Jewish tradition, how of those things line up.

Basically in Jewish tradition, Jesus and Noah shared a birthday which creates this pre-flood link between the two figures. And so the characters in the novel are discussing this and they get into the genealogies of Matthew. The main character Brian basically has his memory jogged and oh yeah, the genealogy of Matthew is a sort of saying the same thing as Jewish tradition. It links Jesus back to Genesis 6 in an odd sort away and so he goes through that and it's only a couple of pages. And it's set in terms of a conversation but that conversation I actually based on the work of Richter's dissertation.

So I would say if you want sort of a real quick overview of what in the world I'm talking about there, I would say get *The Portent* and read chapter 57. It's probably the best I can offer. Now if you subscribe to the Divine Council bibliography project, Richter's dissertation will be part of that but it is something that I can't just release on the Internet. It's going to be behind a password-protected wall. So right now that's about the best I can do with that one.

TS: Her second question is, in Mike's what's next listing of future topics at more unseen realm.com, he writes head covering 1 Corinthians 11 because of the angels. This one you could never do in the church. It has to do with ancient conceptions of sexual fidelity and fecundity. She would appreciate some articles taking this approach. Is there a tie-in to the Divine Council worldview?

MSH: This is stuff under copyright because it comes from a journal. I would say to this questioner, e-mail me and I'll give you the articles for that and I'll throw in Richter's dissertation as well. I don't know if you want to wade through all that material because in the case of the gospel of Matthew that hooks back to Genesis 6, there is no light reading for that other than *The Portent*, chapter 57, and it's really the same thing is true for this one. There are three articles that deal with this. There were three articles sort of exchanged. One author wrote one then another guy responded then the first author responded to that response over the course of a few years in the scholarly journal, *Journal of Biblical Literature*. I'll send you the articles but I can't post them. Now back to the question. Yeah there is a tie-in in the Divine Council worldview but it actually isn't stated in any of the articles. I'll just set it up like this. It's kind of funny because when my trip out to visit Fern and Audrey a few weeks ago, this was on the list of our topics to discuss.

I gave the group a whole list of things that would be in book two after the unseen realm. And this is the one that everybody wanted to do because of the nature of it. So we went through these articles. But in a nutshell, Paul's vocabulary for the head covering in 1 Corinthians 11 shows up in Greco-Roman medical texts and in those texts, the term refers to genitalia, context of sex and reproduction or infertility versus fertility, that kind of thing. So Greco-Roman medical texts like Hippocrates, the Hippocratic oath, this kind of thing. The actual term for the head covering shows up in this literature and there's really something to that. In the first of these three articles, the author basically says this is how we need to understand what Paul's talking about.

He is using this term to refer back to something sexual, something that has to do with genitalia and whatnot to argue for modesty and sexual fidelity in that sort of thing. But you could never go through this in church and really make the points that need to be made because it's pretty explicit language in the article but in a medical context. So the point of the head covering with that backdrop is sexual modesty and fidelity in marriage. But the sexual nature of the material led me when I read the article, and just really thought it was fascinating, it led me to contact the writer of the original article and ask if he thought that Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 11 to take care about the "head covering" had something to do with his line, and it does, Paul connects the two. He connects the head covering logic. He says that you need to be modest here. You need to avoid this or that "because of the angels."

So I asked the author, I said, do you think that the sexual context here and this whole head-covering decision because of the angels has some connection to the sin of the watchers, the sin of the sons of God in Genesis 6, which was a sexual violation. And the author said he did. The author agreed with that. He said yeah, I think that is the case. It wasn't what the article was about but he and I were tracking right on that point. And to really unpack this, I'd have to devote a whole podcast to this one since it would involve reading lengthy excerpts from this article and would involve a disclaimer on the nature of the material as well. But I would say if you want those articles, I will send them to you. I should tell you right now though that these are articles from a scholarly journal. If you don't have a bit of a handle on Greek, it may be really rough reading. But I still kind of think that maybe if you knew at least the alphabet, you could probably track with the author here. But the key idea is that Paul's vocabulary shows up in Greco-Roman medical texts and he's arguing a very prescientific, very weird, very convoluted logic here because they believed, Hippocrates believed, that the length of a woman's hair had something to do with her ability to conceive because the hair on a woman's head, this is going to sound totally bizarre.

But this is what you see in Greek medical texts using the terminology Paul uses here. They believe that the longer a woman's hair was helped draw the semen after sex into the place where it needed to go so that the child deposited, they don't know anything about genetics or any likeness of that, so that after sex the woman had a greater chance of conceiving if her hair was longer. And since hair was associated with conception, you don't want to leave your head uncovered. It's really hard to explain without going through the terminology and going through the discussion. But it's quite explicit because they had this wacky scientific, prescientific idea of the role the woman's hair played in her ability to conceive and how it helped the semen do what it needed to do. It's really difficult to try to explain this without going through all the data but it's fascinating.

It makes a lot of sense, makes more sense than anything I've ever read frankly, on the head covering issue. But it comes from a worldview that is so different than ours, that doesn't align really in any way with how we know where babies come from and how you need genetic material from both the male and the female to come together. You don't have the planting metaphor where a child is deposited in a woman and then it grows. The whole thing is predicated on a prescientific worldview but if you understand that worldview, what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 makes total sense and it relates. And then Paul throws in this line. Hey I'm telling you this because of the angels, and that harkens right back to the sin of the watchers. So maybe we'll do a podcast on that at some point. If you e-mail me, I will give you the articles, but they might be difficult to follow depending on your ability to handle Greek. So I guess I should just leave it at that.