

# **The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0**

**Number 101**

**“Jesus, the Exile, and the Tribulation”**

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**With**

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## **Jesus, the Exile, and the Tribulation**

Lots of Christians interested in prophecy talk about the tribulation period (aka, the “Great Tribulation”), but they never seem to get around to asking where the idea comes from. In this episode we explore the development of the eschatological tribulation idea in Second Temple Jewish literature up to and including the time of Jesus. Surprisingly, asking what the tribulation meant in the actual New Testament era is a recent strategy of scholars – and something that never happens in popular prophecy teaching.

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 101, Jesus, the Exile, and the Tribulation, our first of two shows on eschatology. I'm the 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. Glad to do something kind of fun and normal.

**TS:** I'm still getting over the excitement of last week's show. I really enjoyed everybody that called in and I appreciate everybody that did. Congratulations to Bobby Brooks who won the book that you gave away so that was a fun show to do.

**MSH:** It's always nice. I always like hearing people say they get something out of the content that they care about it and appreciate it. So that's why you do it. You want it to be useful so it was nice to hear.

**TS:** And from all over the world, too, New Zealand, Netherlands, Africa. That's technology, right? You're going to reach every corner of the planet so I'm honored to be a part of the show to do this type of work to share the word everywhere.

**MSH:** It's just great to find people who care. That's really behind a lot of what we do here. That's sort of the orienting point, find people who care about content and give it to them so it's not much more complicated than that.

**TS:** That's why I am excited about the next two shows including this one. I know you don't like getting into it but it's such a hot topic in the Christian community, eschatology, book of revelation and everything that goes with that. There's so many people that try to talk about it or use it for entertainment value or whatnot so I'm interested to get into it a little bit.

**MSH:** We're going to basically, over the next two shows, we're going to be sort of in the Gospels and then in Romans 11 with Paul. It's going to be talking about the exile and the tribulation, and really, what that means is how the tribulation period needs to be understood in light of the first coming and the deliverance of the Israelite community from the exile. It often isn't framed that way but we're going to find out today that's the way Jesus looked at it. It's the way New Testament writers looked at it. Then next week it'll be Paul's phrase about all Israel being saved. I guess just to jump into it, what I'm going to say here will apply really to both weeks. People who've listened to podcasts for any length of time have heard me say things over and over like the Old Testament needs to be understood in its Ancient Near Eastern context. What a profound thought, the context that produced the thing. And they've heard me say the New Testament, therefore, builds off the Old Testament. The New Testament is essentially an inspired commentary on the Old Testament.

So we to pay attention to how the New Testament authors read the Old Testament, how they read it, how they repurposed it, and their understanding of the Old Testament is not going to violate the Old Testament in its own original context. In fact, it will build on it. It will reinforce it. The problem, though, is that people just aren't trained to do that, so when you did do that, it will often when it comes just eschatology especially, you'll often end up defining sort of the sense of literalism that people bring to the Bible. Not just eschatology but it gets

pronounced there because that's the way prophecy gets talked about. We need literal fulfillment. What does literally exactly mean? Language just doesn't just work on this simplistic one-to-one correspondence where I hear a word and the physical thing that pops into my head first that must be the meaning of that word in any given sentence. We don't communicate this way. We don't live this way. We know it's absurd when we say things like I love my wife and I love hotdogs and I love baseball. We know that we're nuancing the term. We know that there's elements of what we would think of as literalism, the way you act out in real life. We know there's metaphor at play.

It's just because we can sort parse that in our heads because it's our language and we know how we're using it. Guess what, the biblical writers had a language and they wrote in it and they did the same thing. They didn't always mean the physical thing of the range of meaning options. They just didn't always do that. Yet Christians are trained to think that way about the Bible. Catch what I'm saying here. They're trained to think about the Bible and the language of the Bible in an entirely different way from the way they use language and that's just a huge mistake. It's a fundamental flaw in the way we think about Scripture. Now when it comes to, people have heard me say this, too, when it comes to sort of the bridge of the Old and New Testament, you have this in between period, the Second Temple period, that is a bridge between the two testaments, not just chronologically, not just historically, but also interpretively and theologically. We spent a lot of time on the podcast talking about how New Testament writers, the way they're reading the Old Testament is consistent with an indicative of the way Jewish interpreters read the Old Testament in their time period because the Second Temple period is few centuries before Jesus and then in the first century with Jesus. It's the time leading up to and including the New Testament.

So the Second Temple period is really important. Second Temple literature, as we've seen many times in the podcast, taps into the Old Testament in its Ancient Near Eastern context. Second Temple Jews had the ancient Israelite in their head a lot more than we do, a lot more than the early church fathers did, a lot more than the founders of modern denominations did, certainly. So Second Temple. Literature is really important, and therefore, we ought to pay more attention to that material for understanding the Old Testament and how the New Testament uses the Old Testament than we give attention to our own denominational traditions. Now that might sound obvious, pay attention to the ancient writers more than you do a modern writer because the ancient writers have the worldview of the cognitive frame of reference in their head. The later guys don't. That might sound unbelievably simple and elementary and obvious but as we've learned on the podcast, as I've learned just being a professor, being a scholar, so on and so forth, that is not intuitive for most people in church. It just isn't. They're not told about that. They're not trained to think that way. They'd ever see it modeled them. The Bible becomes this thing that is filtered through their own personal Christian tradition and that becomes the meaning of the Bible for them.

The Bible is used to reinforce something that their group or denomination or church believes. And that just isn't Bible study. That's not exegesis. So on this podcast and in the other things we produce, we tried to strip all that away. That's why we call it the Naked Bible podcast, Naked Bible blog. This is what we do, we try to strip all that away and say okay, how do we read this thing in light of its own original context? And today we're going to do that with respect to some prophecy stuff, and next week we're to continue that discussion. So in the next two weeks, the use of the Old Testament by New Testament writers will be really important for

understanding some eschatological contexts the way Jesus did and the way the Apostles did, not the way modern prophecy teachers do. There is a gap between those two groups. Jesus, Apostles, people living in the first century, people from the Second Temple period, how they thought about, the topic this week, the tribulation, how they thought about the tribulation and the great tribulation is in some respects fundamentally different than the way modern prophecy teachers talk about tribulation. So that's what we're going to focus on in this episode, tribulation. Now if you actually just looked up the word, it's not terribly common, 45 or so instances where you're going to get *thlipsis*. That's the Greek word for tribulation. Most of the time he talks about like afflictions, personal distresses, personal afflictions in Romans 2:9,

<sup>9</sup> There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,

**MSH:** Something real simple like that. Romans 12:12,

<sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

**MSH:** It has this personal distress flavor to it. In the Gospels, though, that's where you get this sort of sense of the tribulation as an era or a period of time that is characterized by distress, by trouble, by persecution and, specifically, of the people of God. So this is really where the New Testament kind of draws our attention to with respect to this concept of the tribulation. And if you read prophecy books, they're going to quote lots of passages from the Gospels, especially Mark 13 and its equivalent, Matthew 24, so on and so forth. You get a couple of these outside the Gospels where it's kind of a period of time. But overwhelmingly outside the Gospels, it's just personal distress, but inside the Gospels, you have this tribulation concept we associate with end times and the day of the Lord or something eschatological.

What I want to do here is I want to introduce people to something that actually in academia is relatively new. We've spent a lot of time in the podcast talking about recent scholarship or scholarship in general that tries to situate the New Testament, what the New Testament writers are saying in the Second Temple period. When you look in the Second Temple period, the question is how do they understand their Old Testament and does their understanding of the Old Testament jive with the Old Testament on its own contextual terms, the Ancient Near Eastern context? Believe it or not, the notion of doing that stuff, engaging in that discipline when it comes to eschatology, is actually pretty new, even the academic community. I'd say in the last 15 or 20 years, you've had several dissertations come out that engage Second Temple Jewish literature when it comes to end times stuff.

One in particular that got a lot of attention when the dissertation was actually published, the dissertation was done at Notre Dame and published by a guy named Brant Pitre. Now what he focuses on is the tribulation. Believe it or not, his objective, just to quote him real briefly here, his first objective was "to trace the development of the eschatological tribulation in early Second Temple Jewish literature up to and during the time of Jesus while giving attention to the varieties of expression amid ancient documents." You'd look at that and you ask yourself, doesn't everybody do that? Don't all scholars do that? No, they actually didn't. Pitre's dissertation is less than 20 years old. It is just kind of shocking that it's only been recently that

somebody got this approved as a dissertation topic. Wow, great idea, nobody's done that before. Really? Yeah, really.

So no, they don't do this. They haven't done this. And this is why Pitre's work, when it was published, drew a lot of attention. I would say this is analogous. Pitre's work is analogous to, and some of the listeners will be familiar with this, the whole brouhaha over the "new perspective on Paul." Many of you will have heard of NT Wright. He's the sort of the guy who gets labeled with the new perspective on Paul. And the new perspective on Paul actually wasn't new because what Wright was trying to do was look at what Paul said about the law and the works of the law and asked a simple question. What did people in the Second Temple period think of this language? Did they ever use this kind of language? Did they ever use this phrase? How did Jews of Jesus day and a century or two before that between the Testaments, how did they think about the law? Did they really think that if they obey the law, it would save them? Did they really think that was even possible? If they didn't, what were they thinking about the law, and if they didn't take that perspective that I'll keep the law and God will owe me salvation, which if you read your Old Testament, I don't know how you're going to come out with that view? It's very evident that an Israelite like David. He's going to love the law. The law's going to be great.

This is the best thing since sliced bread or whatever. But he's not going to think I can keep it and get to heaven or if I keep enough of it, God will owe me. That is foreign to Old Testament theology. So how did we get to the point in our New Testament interpretation when the Pharisees are going at it with Jesus and when Paul writes, how did we get to the point where we assume that Jews of the first century, Jews of Jesus's day thought they could earn their way to heaven? Wright's just asking questions like this. And if they didn't think this, what did they think and what is Paul shooting at, really, because Paul writes in Romans 7 he has a very high view of the law. He just extols the virtues of the law, but then he turns around and says the law was great but it ain't Jesus. Paul had a very high view of the law, but he had a higher view of Jesus. He had a higher view of what happened on the cross. And the cross was the central focus for salvation, not the law. So this whole discussion as it relates to the law and the works of law that became this controversy within, not just evangelical circles, but really in the wider academic community, which is why Wright got such attention and still does because it's fairly recent. Wright's just going back and looking at, you can count them on one hand the scholars that even asked these questions up to this point, and he's reassessing their work, doing his own work, and out pops the new perspective.

Well, the fact that he did that is just illustrative of what Pitre has done with the tribulation. He's asking obvious questions like I wonder what they thought about this. Did anybody use this language? Are there phrases in the New Testament, in the Gospels, in Matthew 24, in these sermons on the end times, do any of those phrases show up anywhere else prior to Matthew, prior to Mark, in the same contexts? What's going on here? How did they understand these things in the Second Temple period? And so there is emerging sort of a "new perspective" on eschatology because people are actually taking the time now to go back and look in the Second Temple literature and see that it's relevant. I can't really think of any other way to put it. It sounds bizarre, especially if you listen to this podcast anytime soon. You just think that everybody's been doing this forever. Actually, they haven't. But it's important that they do it because this is the context, Second Temple period is the context for the New Testament writers. This is their world. This is what they read. This is what they heard. This is what they thought

about. This is what they interacted with. They're not interacting with the Catholic Church. There is no Catholic Church. They're not interacting with Protestantism, with evangelicals, with all these things that you and I think about because we live at the time in which we live and those things are part of our history, especially in the scope of Christianity. It's different. So Pitre wants to trace this development and the shape, the concept of eschatological tribulation in Second Temple Judaism. He actually focuses, he tells you in his book, on texts from 200 BC to 30 A.D. so he's cutting it off right around Jesus's lifetime there. And he's saying, okay, what do they say? By the way of specific findings, this is a fairly lengthy list. I'm not going to comment on anything specifically here. I will a bit later but listen to this list. This is what Pitre lists in his dissertation as specific findings in Second Temple literature. None of this is New Testament but in the literature of Judaism prior to the time of Jesus, prior to the time of the incarnation. This is what Jews thought about the tribulation. Here we go.

1. The tribulation is tied to the restoration of Israel and the End of the Exile.
2. A righteous remnant arises during the tribulation.
3. The righteous suffer and/or die during the tribulation. This sometimes includes the suffering and/or death of a messianic figure.
4. The tribulation is tied to the coming of a Messiah, sometimes referred to as the "Son of Man."
5. The tribulation precedes the final judgment.
6. The tribulation is depicted as the eschatological climax of Israel's exilic sufferings, often through the imagery of the Deuteronomic covenant curses.
7. The tribulation has two stages: (1) the preliminary stage, and (2) the Great Tribulation.
8. The tribulation precedes the coming of an eschatological kingdom.
9. An eschatological tyrant, opponent, or anti-Messiah arises during the tribulation.
10. Typological images from the Old Testament are used to depict the tribulation.
11. The tribulation is tied to the ingathering and/or conversion of the Gentiles.
12. The tribulation has some kind of atoning or redemptive function.
13. The Jerusalem Temple is defiled and/or destroyed during the tribulation.
14. The tribulation precedes the resurrection of the dead and/or a new creation.

**MSH:** Now, just by way of observation, a few simple observations then we'll get into some details. All of that sounds a lot like the New Testament. It would be hard to find something in there that you can't find in the New Testament Gospels. It's be really challenging so that list mirrors the New Testament Gospel tribulation statements very closely. What that tells you is that the guys writing the New Testament aren't like here's what the Jews think about the tribulation. Let's mess with that. Let's just change it up. Let's just do something different. Let's say something different. They don't do that. They are firmly in this stream of thought. Now what

they have that's different is the present Messiah, and that is going to influence how they say certain things, the meaning they assign to certain terms, so on so forth. But this shouldn't be shocking because ultimately the tribulation idea is hooked back into the Old Testament and everybody's using the Old Testament. It's the same Old Testament whether you live in the Second Temple period or in you're a New Testament writer. Another observation, Jesus teaching, his own teaching specifically if you're going to believe Jesus said what the Gospel writers say he said, his own teaching is therefore right in the sweet spot of messianic expectation and Jewish thinking about the tribulation. Thirdly, and here I want to start getting into some detail, Jesus understanding of the tribulation was inextricably tied to the ancient Jewish hope for the end of the exile, and that's because the great tribulation language refers to a time of exilic woes and the deliverance of Israel that has its roots in the Old Testament. A couple passages, Jeremiah 30:7 says,

Alas! That day is so great  
there is none like it;  
it is a time of distress for Jacob;  
yet he shall be saved out of it.

**MSH:** Now, what is basically every chapter of Jeremiah about? It's about the impending exile of Judah, the kingdom of Judah, the southern kingdom, the last two tribes, it's about their impending defeat and exile at the hands of Babylon. They're going to get carried away. Jeremiah says when this happens, go up to verse 5,

“Thus says the LORD:  
We have heard a cry of panic,  
of terror, and no peace.  
Ask now, and see,  
can a man bear a child?  
Why then do I see every man  
with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor?  
Why has every face turned pale?

**MSH:** Just distress after distress after distress because the Babylonians are bearing down on them and they know what's coming because Jeremiah's basically spent his whole life telling him what's going to happen. And he says in verse 7, there's never been a day like this day when this tribulation comes, this distress, the time of Jacob's trouble. So that phrase that lots of prophecy writers will talk about as being distant future, that phrase comes right out of Jeremiah 30 and its linked to the exile. That's an important thing to store away and note. In verse 10 of Jeremiah 30 we read,

<sup>10</sup> “Then fear not, O Jacob my servant, declares the LORD,  
nor be dismayed, O Israel;  
for behold, I will save you from far away,  
and your offspring from the land of their captivity.  
Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease,  
and none shall make him afraid.



<sup>11</sup> For I am with you to save you,  
declares the LORD;  
I will make a full end of all the nations  
among whom I scattered you,  
but of you I will not make a full end.  
I will discipline you in just measure,  
and I will by no means leave you unpunished.

**MSH:** Think about what you just heard there. The Lord actually mentions both segments, both portions, both kingdoms, Jacob and Israel of the 12 tribes, and when he gets to the part about saving them and returning them from the land of their captivity, he only mentions Jacob. But nevertheless, he says I'm going to deal with all the nations among whom I scattered you. So this is a little bit foreshadowing what I'm going to focus on next week but for this week, it's important because here we have this talk, the time of Jacob's trouble, linked specifically to the Old Testament exile that involves all the tribes and we get a hint here about Jacob returning but we're not quite sure, Jeremiah didn't specifically say Israel would return. He did say that the nations would get dealt with but what's going on there? Are they going to come back? What's going on?

So you have this sort of flavoring, this foreshadowing historically of what the circumstances are going to be because we know the rest story. Judah does get conquered. They go off into exile. They are allowed to return but the 10 tribes never return. And prophecy teachers now like to say that's distant future. Their salvation is distant future. That's the re-gathering of Israel. All Israel will be saved. Well, maybe it's not quite what you think it is. We'll hit that more next week. For this week, store this thought away, that the tribulation is inextricably tied to the exile and the hope of deliverance from the exile. Look at Daniel 12. Same language, Michael, the great prince, who is in charge of your people, he will rise at that time, at the end, the great eschatological day of the Lord.

“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.

**MSH:** Again, echoing the language we just read in Jeremiah. So there we go again. We have this trouble talked about that's just unprecedented. But in Daniel, you get this glimmer of hope because Daniel 12 was going to go into how does it end? It has a good ending for the people of God. Now without rabbit trailing onto Michael, Michael is not Jesus. At the very least, Michael is a similar sort of foreshadowing figure pointing to the kinds of things the book of Revelation describes. Notice here for all those Michael is Jesus people, not only do we have Daniel 10 saying Michael is one of the chief princes and Michael actually has to essentially report to someone else, someone higher. Not only do you have that problem if you identify Michael with Jesus, but if you read Daniel 12, at that time shall arise Michael the great prince who is charged over your people, it never says Michael delivers them. We know who does deliver them, and that's Jesus. Daniel 12 never actually has Michael doing anything. He shows up and he fulfills some role. What role we're not really told. It is just there's something about the guardianship of the nation of Israel in the distant end times, the day of the Lord.

This equation that a lot of people want to strike is shaky at best. But the very least, Michael's part of this matrix of ideas. Let's take this observation that the tribulation idea is connected to the exile. The time of Jacob's trouble in the Old Testament is the exile and connect it with the deliverance from exile, this great hope of deliverance from exile. The tribulation period then eschatologically for the Jew living in Jesus day was not a distant thing. When Jesus showed up, when the Messiah showed up, the Messiah was the king of Israel, the expectation was that he's supposed to be the king of Israel here so that must mean that we're still in exile but the exile must be ending. Otherwise, why would the Messiah show up? For Second Temple Jews and Jesus and the Gospel writers, Israel was still in exile and this was the time of tribulation, his first coming. That is what a Jew when all this is happening in the New Testament, that's what they're thinking. Now NT Wright picked up on this thought and NT Wright and Pitre actually have a bit of a disagreement on this and I'm going to bring this up. I think there's something important here to notice.

Wright writing before Pitre said that his position on the return from exile was that most Jews of the period, Second Temple period, would have answered the question of what's going on, where are we in God's timetable. Wright says most Jews would have answered that question that we're still in exile and they believe that in sort of all the ways that it mattered. Israel's exile was still ongoing. Yes, Judah had come back from Babylon but Israel, the other 10 tribes, still remained off somewhere and even Judah, even the ones that came back, were still under the boot of foreigners, under the boot of the Gentiles. And even worse than that, Israel's God hadn't yet returned to Zion. The glory had not yet returned. The presence of God had not yet returned to Zion. So if you asked the average Israelite, according to NT Wright this is what they're thinking. We're still in exile. Even though we live here, even though the Persians were nice and let us come back all those years ago, now we're just dealing with the Romans. We're still under their boot. So this hasn't ended for us. We're still in this sense in exile and we're waiting to be delivered. What Pitre, in his response to Wright, says is this. He sees Wright saying three things. Babylonian exile didn't really end, the exile no longer refers to really necessarily a geographical captivity because the Jews are in Judea so it's not just about geography but it's about again free.

That's how Pitre understands what Wright is saying. I think he has a good hold on that. But what Pitre says, Wright's missing something here. He's missing an important thought. He says Wright doesn't put enough emphasis on the significant fact that even during the Second Temple. Period, the greater portion of Israel remained outside the land. They remained in exile, 10 tribes that were taken by the Assyrians and scattered to the wind. In other words Pitre and others would say that Wright's view is too, I know it doesn't sound positive, but they say it sounds too positive. He has too much of the exile being resolved though that's not over. It's even too rosy of a picture just to say we're almost out of it. We got to get rid of the Romans but we're back in the land. No, actually you're not. Pitre would say you're scattered to the wind. Most of Israel is not in the land and that is what a Jew would really have been thinking. We need to be united as all 12 Tribes. Our destinies are tied together. We all need to be brought back into the land. The Lord has to return to Zion and the Spirit of God has to return to us, all this sort of stuff. This is a lot worse than NT Wright is saying. So Pitre and others are saying he's too positive. The Jews aren't still in exile because foreigners still govern them and they're back in the land, No, even though that true, it's worse. They're still in exile because most of them aren't there. They're still scattered to the wind and that's even worse. Now what Pitre's position is, I'm

just going to read you a paragraph here of someone who actually summarized what Petrie saying here. He's saying,

“Most Jews of this period [the Second Temple period], it seems, would have answered the question ‘where are we?’ with the response: ‘we have returned to the land, but the rest of Israel is still in exile; the lost ten tribes of the northern kingdom have not yet returned.’ They believed that, in all senses which mattered, Israel’s exile, which had begun with the deportation to Assyria, was still in progress. Although the Judean exiles had come back from Babylon, the rest of Israel had not yet returned from being scattered by the Assyrians; hence, the glorious message of the prophets regarding the ingathering of all twelve tribes remain unfulfilled. The lost ten tribes of Israel still remained scattered among the nations.”

**MSH:** Where does all this leave us? I think Pitre is right. I think this is how we need to think about it. The Jew sitting there, Jesus comes around. This guy is supposed to be the Messiah and he's thinking if he's really the Messiah, we're still in exile, so let's see a solution to that. We are living in the period of tribulation that Jeremiah 30 talked about and we are waiting for the deliverance that Daniel 12 talks about. So let's see this guy unite the people of God back together again. Let's see this guy be the return of God to Zion. Let's see this guy usher in the presence of God, the Spirit of God, the glory of God, returning back to Israel. That's what we want to see. Let's see that. If you think about who Jesus was, what he did and how he's presenting the Gospels, he is presented as God in the flesh.

And so God has returned to Zion but he just got crucified. Now what? We're still in tribulation. This wasn't the answer. He wasn't the answer. All these questions floating around in their head. And when Jesus rises from the dead and he shows up before he ascends, it's very natural that the disciples would ask him, is this the time that we're going to restore the kingdom? Yeah, you're going to restore the kingdom now. What does he tell them? He gives them a promise but there's a bit of an open-ended element to the promise. At this time are you going to restore the kingdom? And we covered this in Acts, this question, but if we want to go back to the book of Acts, in Acts 1:7 is where they asked the question and he says to them,

<sup>7</sup> He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. <sup>9</sup> And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.”

**MSH:** So he doesn't come out and say no. He sort of says no. Just hold on, it's not for you to know the exact timing of all this stuff. But I'll tell you what you will see. You will see and receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and that happens at Pentecost. So here's the question. Does Pentecost with its re-gathering of Jews from all over the known world, does Pentecost end the exile of the 12 tribes? Now it's clear that the geographical distribution of Jews who come into Jerusalem can't just be limited to the places where the two tribes returned from. They don't all come from Babylon. Babylon's in the list of Acts chapter 2, but they come from

everywhere. They come from all the places that the Jews had been scattered to the wind. They come from all over the known world. This is the fundamental eschatological question about the tribulation. Because if the tribulation is linked to the exile, and it is, and if the tribulation is linked to the first coming of the Messiah, God returns to Zion in the form of Jesus Christ. But with that return, we have to have all of the tribes being gathered back into, and my wording is deliberate here, back into the people of God, back into the family of God, which in the Old Testament context is Israel, was it not?

The tribulation, the exile's only to end when these things happen. So the key question becomes does Pentecost with its regathering of Jews from all over the world, does it end the exile of the 12 tribes, because if it does, then we need to adjust our prophecy talk about the tribulation. I'll just go further. If it does, then the tribulation period spoken by the Gospels is history to us, at least most of it. We'll get to that in a moment. But if Pentecost solves the exilic problem, and I think it does, if Pentecost solves that problem then a lot of what prophecy teachers are talking about the tribulation is just not true. It's a misinterpretation of the tribulation idea because to us, you and I living in the 21st century, that tribulation they're talking about is history. It happened in the book of Acts. The exile was over, the jubilation ended. That should raise logical questions. If it's history and not prophecy, what about the other stuff that happens in the book of Acts?

You can look at Acts and say there was an eschatological gathering of Jews from all 12 Tribes back into Jerusalem at Pentecost. That can make sense. Jews everywhere are being brought into the reconstituted family of God. That makes sense because they become believers in the Messiah. Gentiles included in the family of God, remember the list in Pitre's dissertation, How Second Temple Jews thought about it, it included the Gentiles. That happens in the book of Acts, too. That makes sense. Persecution, now wait a minute. If the tribulation has ended, why was there still persecution and what about the return of Jesus? Here it's valuable I think to notice that even in the Second Temple period, and the preterists aren't going to like this, even in the Second Temple period before you ever get to the New Testament, before Jesus ever shows up, Jews, the way they thought about the tribulation, they thought about the tribulation period that was linked to the exile, and that had to be resolved, but they also thought about a great tribulation that was a second stage. That isn't invented by people from Dallas Seminary and that isn't invented by Marv Rosenthal or whatever name you want your throw in here. That is a Second Temple period Jewish expectation.

What we have here, if you're an alert listener, you know what I'm going to say at this point. This is yet another example of the already but not yet pattern of biblical theology. The tribulation is already over but not yet. The tribulation that ended the exile at the first coming of Christ when the kingdom of God was inaugurated, the kingdom is already present but not yet in its full form. If you've read Unseen Realm, this is old news to you. It is the same with the tribulation period. It's this pattern, this consistent pattern already but not yet. This is why I don't buy into any of the systems because the preterists are out there saying it's already over. Some of them will even say the Lord already returned, the full preterists. It's already over. There's nothing to look for. You're just picking one aspect and running with it. On the other side, you get the people who don't like the preterists, whether they're dispensationalists or premillennialists or whatever, whatever version of the rapture, if there is a rapture, whatever. You get him saying none of it's over. It's all future. They take the other side and run to the wind with that. The systems are artificial. They cheat.

Here's another example. In the tribulation period, if you really want to talk well about the tribulation, you will talk about already being done with, it's history, but not yet. Now go back to the list of expectations. There was this twofold two-stage tribulation, tribulation and great tribulation. There was an anti-Messiah enemy. There was the destruction of the temple. There was the Abomination of Desolation, all this kind of stuff. What about that stuff? I want to talk a little bit about that but all those things kind of together here. It's very easy if you go to Matthew 24:5, it's very easy to see how the New Testament writers are dividing up the tribulation language into a tribulation period and then a great tribulation. Let's start in verse 5.

<sup>5</sup> For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. <sup>6</sup> And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. <sup>7</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. <sup>8</sup> All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

<sup>9</sup> "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. <sup>10</sup> And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. <sup>11</sup> And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. <sup>12</sup> And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> But the one who endures to the end will be saved. <sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

**MSH:** So you get this sort of already but not yet kind of feel and then it repeats, verse 15,

<sup>15</sup> "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), <sup>16</sup> then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup> Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, <sup>18</sup> and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. <sup>19</sup> And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! <sup>20</sup> Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. <sup>21</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. <sup>22</sup> And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

**MSH:** Now a lot of people listening to this will be thinking that's all future. It's not this two-stage thing. It's very easy to read that as two-stage thinking, and especially, I'm going to ask you to do this. If you don't have your Bible with you, you may not believe your ears here when you hear this. Go get your Bible and we're going to stay in Matthew 24:15-16 for this already not yet kind of thing, because the other side of eschatology says here we have all these things, he's speaking to the disciples and they were persecuted and the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. and

you had this tyrant figure Titus who comes in and destroys the temple. You have all these things happening. It's all past. Matthew 24:15-16 says this. Now listen really carefully.

<sup>15</sup> “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),  
<sup>16</sup> then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup> Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, <sup>18</sup> and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. <sup>19</sup> And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! <sup>20</sup> Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. <sup>21</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. <sup>22</sup> And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

<sup>29</sup> “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>30</sup> Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

**MSH:** Now the thing to catch here is the first two verses.

<sup>15</sup> “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),  
<sup>16</sup> then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

**MSH:** Here's how Luke words it. It's exactly the same context, exactly the same sermon. Luke 21:20-27,

<sup>20</sup> “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. <sup>21</sup> Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains,

**MSH:** Do you see what Luke has just done there? Everybody wants to read Matthew 24 and say this is about the Antichrist in the middle of the tribulation going into the temple and doing something that Antiochus did, slaying the pig on the altar. And this is distant distant future, that's the abomination. Really? Luke would disagree. Luke says when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies then know that its desolation, it's the same word for the abomination of desolation, then know its desolation has come near. When you see that happening, let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, just like Mathew said. Luke has the abomination as being the destruction of Jerusalem and that happened in 70 AD. Now those who insist on the tribulation only being in the future will say will Matthew's right and Luke, I don't know what's going on with Luke. We got to have something there to have Luke say the same thing because then I got to throw out my Left Behind novels, got to fix that problem.

And the preterist want to harp on Luke. See, there you go, 70 A.D. Jerusalem destroyed. That's the abomination. It's all in the past. Both of them will look knowledge, at least most of the preterists will say that there's a future second coming and you get this heavenly celestial language which, by the way, some of that actually happened at Pentecost. Yes it did. But you still have in the distant future the return of the Lord and all that stuff. In between these events, whether it be 70 A.D. or anything else AD, the first century between that and the second coming, you have lots of things happening. You have what, what does Paul talk about? You have the fullness of the Gentiles. The fullness of the Gentiles has to happen for the Lord return. That's our topic for the next week. But you have this sense of one writer has it already happening. If we read Luke it's the already event of the tribulation and if we read Matthew, maybe the abomination of desolation is the destruction of Jerusalem and Matthew doesn't disagree. Maybe that's how we should read Daniel 9 because Luke's certainly doing that. But even if you don't want to go there, you could say maybe Matthew has the not yet part. Here's the point folks.

There is a pile of stuff to think about here. There is a pile of stuff to think about here. The next time you pick up a book or you hear a conference speaker or you hear a sermon or whatever about end times and they just make a blanket statement that the tribulation is a seven-year period in the distant future, shut him off. There is just all lot more going on here than that. I'm hoping you can see glimpses of the already but not yet pattern. At the very least, I'm hoping you see that it's just not as clear as Tim LaHaye says it was or John Haggee. It just isn't that clear and you know why, because it's just not. There's a lot going on here that both of the systems, and I'm referring to them broadly, the preterists and the non-preterists, let's just call them that, they want you to gravitate toward their view because they're only giving you half of the picture. There's two sides of the picture and the answer is yes. It's already but not yet so all of this, to try to bring this to a bit of a close and give you some just general things to think about here, it's clear, about the only thing that is clear, it's clear that the tribulation is not only an eschatological idea, a distant future idea, it's clear that in a number of passages you can link it to Jesus first coming and you can link it to events in the first century, the apostolic era.

That much is clear. The rest of it, the stuff if that's clear then what are some things that maybe I should take with a grain of salt? What are some things that are kind of suspect then? Here are the things that are suspect. I'll give you three of them. One, casting the 70th week of Daniel as the tribulation and hence, the tribulation as this missing seven-year period, doing that should be viewed with suspicion. Why, not only because there's an already not yet thing going on with the tribulation but also there is no verse in the entire Bible that links those two ideas. There is no verse that refers to the 70th week as the tribulation. There is no verse that talks about the tribulation period that gives a number of years to its existence or to its playing out. There's no verse that unites those two things but that is taken today as axiomatic by many. There is just literally nothing to hang that hat on. Second, casting the tribulation and even the great tribulation, even if you think they're separate things and I do, but casting them as both distant future is just not correct. At the very least, it's clear that the apostolic period was a period of tribulation, the first century. You can tie the tribulation language to the first century. You can tie the tribulation language to the gathering of Jews if you look at Pentecost that way. You can do that. You can make that argument.

You can tie it to messianic expectation. You can tie it to the beginning of the kingdom. You can tie it to the appearance of God returning design in the form of Jesus Christ. You can tie it to the return of the glory, the spirit of God, to Jerusalem in Acts 2. You can tie the tribulation

to all of these things but yet there are still some things that are put out further. So you can't take all the language and say its all future. That is just not true. That his poor exegesis, poor interpretation. Third, if there are chronological reconstructions of a messianic timeline, and we've talked about this back in Leviticus when we talked about the Jubilee chapter. Some of you who have been longtime listeners will remember that. If there is a chronological reconstruction, if you can actually do this where you have the 69 weeks and the 70th week and the Jubilee thing and the 77s and all the stuff, if you can get a chronological reconstruction to that, and you can, and by the way, there's probably three or four of them. I posted an article by Ben Zion Bokholder where he does a really nice job of laying all these things out and disconnecting it from Jesus but also connecting it from Jesus.

He's a Jewish writer. He just wants his readers to look, it just depends how you play with the data and how you play with the language. You can come up with a number of these schemes, but here's the kicker. No New Testament author bothers to do that. Do you realize that? No New Testament author bothers to connect the tribulation in a chronology about the coming of Jesus or the second coming. That ought to tell you something because prophecy teachers today basically do that every chapter of every book they write because that sells. The New Testament writers don't even bother. To me, I think that's highly suggestive. Personally, I think the great tribulation is likely this yet future thing because I believe in this already not yet pattern. I think it's very evident in Scripture in a number of respects. So great tribulation yet to come. I'm there but I see no reason to define it in terms of a seven-year period. I see no reason to expect a future literal temple, in fact. We didn't even get into temple language. If you're going to talk about the temple of God, it would be nice to include New Testament temple talk because there's a good bit of that.

So what I found in teaching that, a lot of people want to sort of look at the prophecy. They refer to it as this prophecy of Ezekiel, the temple vision, Ezekiel 40-48. They want to say that was literal and it was written literally to the people who were of the day. Maybe it's literal now, maybe not. Maybe it's a little bit of both. Look, any literal view of that prophecy, Ezekiel 40-48, has some issues to resolve. Many in my experience want to affirm a literal temple but not the sacrifices for obvious reasons. The book of Hebrews says the sacrificial system is over and done with. To bring the sacrifices back is to render the atoning value of all people past, present, and future, it renders it null because now we have to have sacrifices. Oh no, they're just to commemorate the Gospel, commemorate the event of the cross. Really? If the sacrifices aren't supposed to be literal, why do you need a temple to begin with? Who needs a temple with no sacrifices? What would the point be? If Jesus sacrifice covered us who lived well after the event, why wouldn't it cover others who live later in a millennium, for those millennialists out there? Why not? Why is Jesus sacrifice good now for atonement but in the millennium we need this new temple to like do something with the new people living there? Why? The atoning sacrifice of Christ is sufficient or it's not.

That's the point of the book of Hebrews. Why would people need sacrifices as a reminder of the atonement of Jesus? I got an idea. Why not just hand them a New Testament and have them read about the cross? Why would anybody need sacrifices for understanding how Jesus fulfilled the point of sacrifice when they can just read it like you and I did? And with respect to modern Jews, they haven't needed the Old Testament sacrificial system commemorated to them to become believers in Jesus the Messiah since the temple was destroyed 2000 years ago. Nobody has needed it. Why do we need it in a millennium? Jews have come to Christ just fine



for 2000 years without needing a temple to explain what they're supposed to do. I'm just going off here, a little riff here. The New Testament is pretty clear about its own use of temple language in association with Jesus body, Spirit, presence of God was in him, to say the least, and of course believers.

Why would we look for a literal temple when 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, have believers, individually and corporately, because the grammar is both singular and plural, why if that's the case, the Spirit of God inhabits believers individually and corporately as the church and calls both the temple of God, why do we need another temple? If the people of Ezekiel's day couldn't imagine a temple without literal sacrifices, I sort of get that. That's their context but maybe they couldn't have also imagined the temple being an indwelt person. Maybe they couldn't have imagined that either. But God could, and the New Testament writers do. It's the same presence of God in people, and if Jesus replaces the temple, he does so nonliterally since the temple was still standing during his lifetime. But the non-literal nature of it is still real. Nonliteral doesn't mean not real, and if the temple's built in the millennium, then what happened to it? What happens to it because in Revelation 21:22 it says there's no temple in the holy city. I could just go on and on and on with the problems for this, the inconsistencies of this thinking. I'll throw in another one. I went to a meeting of a few months ago about, and they were very well-meaning. It's sort of a quasi-political religious kind of group advocating rebuilding the temple. They're messianic Jews and Christians advocating rebuilding the Temple in the Temple Mount. And one of the Christians up there defending the view quoted this passage in defense of the idea of rebuilding the Temple as some kind of necessity. Luke 1:32-33, I'll read it to you. This is the birth announcement about Jesus.

<sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

**MSH:** Now not only is the temple never mentioned there but guess what folks, the throne of David was not the temple. You realize that? The throne of David was in David's house. King David didn't live in the temple. I could just go on and on and on with this. And I know I'm going to get feedback. This is why Mike doesn't do eschatology because it irritates him so much. It does. People get so fixated on this subject and if it interest's you, great. If it gets you into your Bible, wonderful. But when they start to look at other believers who don't have their own eschatological scheme, they're not committed to it, they start to look at them and I wonder if that person is really saved or not.

Are they really committed? Maybe they need to get right with God. Maybe they're not really believers. That's ridiculous. It's just ridiculous. So I would agree, I'll close with this, I would agree with, kind of to wrap up, George Eldon Ladd in his book *Theology in the New Testament* writes this. He's talking about the mixture of the already, the mixture of history when it talks about tribulation, the already, the mixing of history, the already part, and future eschatology, the not yet part. He talks about when the New Testament presents it that way, it's actually imitating the Old Testament. Who'd a thought? New Testament writers following the Old Testament. Here's what he says. He has examples in here. Ladd says,

“In Amos, the day of the Lord is both a historical event, Amos 5:18-20, and an eschatological event, Amos 7:4, 8:8-9, 9:5. Amos presents the same concept, the same phrase as both historical and eschatological. Isaiah describes the historical day of visitation on Babylon as though it was the eschatological Day of the Lord, Is 13. Zephaniah describes the day of the Lord, Zeph 1:7,14, as an historical disaster at the hands of an unnamed foe, Zephaniah 1:10-12, 16-17, 2:5-15, but he also describes it in terms of a worldwide catastrophe in which all creatures are swept off the face of the earth, Zephaniah 1:1-3, so that nothing remains, Zephaniah 1:18. This way of viewing the future expresses the view that in the crises of history, the eschatological is foreshadowed. The divine judgments and history are, so to speak, rehearsals of the last judgment and the successive incarnations of antichrist are foreshadowings of the last supreme concentration of the rebelliousness of the devil before the end.”

**MSH:** I think that is just, it's so telling that what the New Testament writers are doing is following the example of the Old Testament. So when I talk about these things, the meaning I assigned to the terms, is going to overlap sometimes with what Christians are thinking about them, a lot of Christians, but it also departs in significant ways. And what I'm thinking doesn't fit precisely into what most futurists would say or what the preterists would say. It has elements that both would gravitate toward and basically want you only to think about. And frankly, I don't care if what I say or what I've said in this episode or any other point, I don't care if it fits in one system or not. I'm not here to endorse systems. They are, frankly, all too simplistic and they sort of dispense with the outliers. They just want you to focus on part of the picture and what we need to do is focus on the whole picture and realize there's just a lot to think about here. It's not self-evident.

**TS:** Can you spell that out for us? Do you have a timeline of events you subscribe to relating to the tribulation and the rapture?

**MSH:** No, as soon as you acknowledge that the seven year tribulation, that there is no such thing, at least in scriptural language, that the tribulation is never given a number of years, it blows all of the chronologies away. They just become dust. So you can have a relative chronology. I guess the Lord has to come back before the kingdom is finally consummated. Well, duh, of course. You have relative events. The antichrist would have to be around before the Lord comes back because he has to do bad stuff then he gets punished. So that's a relative chronology. But in terms of the kind of specificity that people want and that writers try to articulate, what they hang these things on are, just to put it kindly, insecure. They are uncertain. Even the whole issue about the judgments in Revelation, you got that the trumpet judgments, the seal judgments, the bowl judgments, there's a whole issue of do they all in overlap or are they consecutive? Do we have 6, 6, and 6?

Do we have all them overlapping that happen at roughly the same time? Do any of them overlap at all? Number three over here overlaps with number four over in this list. All of that is a huge quagmire. It's an interpretive quagmire of who's right. Even the book of Revelation itself, should I read the book of Revelation as a linear chronology of events or should I read it as a

series of cycling events, events that repeat on each other? There's 3, 4, 5 cycles of the same events described in similar but not exactly the same language, is that the way to read the book or Revelation? You can build that argument and show some really good examples of that in the book of Revelation but then the other side says no. It's none of this a cycle stuff. It's all a linear chronology. We're never told how to read it. And the chronology of those things is intimately tied to these chronological reconstruction schemes. I don't offer any because that's just inventing something for somebody to look at and pretending that I know what I'm talking about and I'm just not going to do it.

**TS:** So you're saying you're not a fan of Left Behind movies?

**MSH:** I've never seen the movie. My visit to Tyndale House when, how can I abbreviate this and not digress? Once upon a time, Mike was invited to Tyndale House by one of the editors of the Left Behind series who called Mike on the phone one day and said I've just read your novel, *The Façade*. I edit the Left Behind series and you should be the next big thing. That died on the vine in the morass, the pecking order of how publishers, in this case to Tyndale, do things. That was my first and only exposure to Left Behind, because the editor was so excited to have me visit the office, gave me all the copies. And by the way, the guy whom I'm referencing, who's no longer there, didn't believe any of it. He was not a dispensationalist. And asked him, I said so what's your eschatology and here was his eschatology. This is a guy who edited Left Behind. He said none of us are getting away with anything. I thought that's a good answer. I liked that answer. In other words, God will judge the wicked in the end and those who are his, those who are saved will be saved and that's what matters.

**TS:** There's so much time and energy that seems to be wasted on this and nobody knows. Be secure in your relationship and don't worry about it. It's going to happen when it happens, and just be prepared. That's all you can do.

**MSH:** For those who have read my fiction, that is the closest I will come to playing eschatology. But even then, sandbox is different. I don't like the sandbox given to me. I will do different things but I will not set dates. I will not offer this or that, when this happens and this is fulfilled. I think that all such things are a house of cards. I know most of the writers who do this sort of thing aren't intentionally lying to people but I have to think some of them who just know that when I'm telling people in this book, it is really a house of cards. What I'm presenting could go another 3 or 4 or 5 ways depending on how this or that word is taken or this or that phrase or in, frankly, if I ever checked the Old Testament, what the Old Testament says, it is just going to all vanish. It's all going to fall apart. I think if you know that and you still present people with this is the way it's going to work, you're lying to them. I really think that. But I don't think that that happens too much because I think most people who write about this stuff are ignorant about a lot of things. And so I can't lay intentionality at their feet. But I tend not to worry about it unless someone ties it to salvation and someone's commitment to the Lord. If they tie their eschatological position to things like that, that is an irritant and I've seen too much of it. So I guess people can tell by this time in the episode it does irritate me.