

# **The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0**

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**“Q&A 13”**

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**With**

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## **Q&A 13**

Our 13th Question and Answer episode!

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 105, Q&A 13. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing this week?

**MSH:** Good, good. It feels like it's been a really fast week, just very busy.

**TS:** It's been a fast year. I can't believe we're already in summer, half the year's almost over. That's nuts.

**MSH:** Yeah, that is kind of crazy when you think about it.

**TS:** We're in the middle of June. I don't understand. Time just keeps going.

**MSH:** That's what it's supposed to do. It's doing what it's supposed to do.

**TS:** It'd be nice to pause it every now and then.

**MSH:** Yeah, tell me about it.

**TS:** I also wanted to mention real quick that I mentioned on the end of the last show. I just want to let all of our Android listeners and users aware that our podcast is now in the Google play app and we're in the top 50 in the religion section. So if you use Google play, please go subscribe to our show so you can listen to it on your Android. And that's pretty neat to be in the top 50 of the religion section in Google so go describe and help us stay in the top 50 if you will. We'd appreciate it.

**MSH:** Good, I don't have a vast knowledge of podcast or anything like that but there is a lot in that orbit so to be in the top 50 is pretty good.

**TS:** Don't forget if you do listen to us via iTunes, we would really appreciate it if you go rate us and give us a review. That would help other people to discover the show and the content. We appreciate everybody that has done that. Alright Mike, you want to just jump into our questions here?

**MSH:** Sure, let's go.

**TS:** Our first one is from Tim from Emmaus, Pennsylvania, and he's talking about the question that I actually asked you about how to jumpstart Jubilee in a podcast and he's wondering if Mike could comment on any connection possibly between the question Peter asked about forgiveness and Matthew 18:21, about Jesus says about those 77 or 70x7 if there's any connection between that language and the language of Leviticus 25. So essentially, forgiveness would be declaring a Jubilee over a person, restoring them back to the original state of the relationship, sort of a micro Jubilee.

**MSH:** Well, I think just broadly, I don't see any connection between Leviticus 25 and the Jubilee language and forgiveness itself. If you look up the Hebrew verb for instance used in

Leviticus and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible for forgive, to forgive, it's *salach* in Hebrew. It never appears in Leviticus 25 so I don't see a connection there. And most scholars would say that what Jesus is referencing is actually pretty clear and pretty specific, that Jesus would be referencing Genesis 4:24. This is the incident where Lamech says he's going to take revenge on people. And the reason it's significant and why all scholars go there is because the Hebrew there in the Genesis 4:24,

If Cain's revenge is sevenfold,  
then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold.

**MSH:** The Hebrew there is very clearly 77 and not 70x7. And the Septuagint, which of course is Greek, translates that with exactly the same words as we find in Matthew. So there's a pretty clear connection as far as what is being referenced and it isn't Leviticus 25 or Jubilee. When you think about it, the rabbis did discuss the question of forgiveness broadly and they recommended no more than three times in certain rabbinic sources, specifically yoma 86B and 87A if anybody has the Talmud, you can resource that. So Peter himself in Matthew 18 suggests seven, which is more generous than the rabbinic thinking that you are going to see discussed in those kind of sources but then Jesus ups the ante and does the 77. That's really the way it should be translated.

The Greek text their Matthew should be 77 because it is a mirror image. It is an exact duplicate of Genesis 4:24 where the Hebrew behind that is quite clear that it's 77. So Jesus is essentially looking at this and going the extra mile as we like to speak with what he's offering or suggesting really. I wouldn't say it's just a recommendation. I think it is something to be taken seriously as though it's a command but he's saying we should be unlimited in our forgiveness, kind of exactly the opposite of what we see back here in the Old Testament. So that passage in Genesis 4:24 would've been familiar to Jewish readers, Jewish hearers. So I think that's really what's in view. As far as the Jubilee thing, Jubilee if you go back and look at Leviticus 25, it doesn't refer to forgiveness. It's about the land having rest. So the forgiveness aspect really isn't in there. If it was in there then you might wonder. But since it's not in there, I don't really see a connection.

**TS:** The next four is from Matthew in the UK and I'll just go ahead and read them all because they are all related to each other. The first one is what are the differences between a prophet and a seer? Are the roles similar or are they separate in ancient Israelite religion? Is a role of seer more akin to tribal shamans such as finding lost items with the aid of divination, thinking 1 Samuel 9 here, and how are such terms linked with soothsayers and *Ish Elohim* man of God? Has the role of seer disappeared by the Second Temple Period?

**MSH:** Let's take the man of God one first. Man of God is a phrase that's used not a lot in the Old Testament. It's not rare but it's used to refer to several different things. It is used in the Angel of the Lord in Judges 13. Sampson's parents see this individual and hear what he has to say about the birth of their son and they refer to him as *Ish Elohim*. So there's man of God there but that's pretty limited. When it gets applied to the Lord, it's only in this passage. And you can see why it would be, because they can at least the first time around discern that this is anybody other than a man and telling them what God says.

So in it's not surprising we get this label. Secondly, it is used of named individuals that are spokespeople for God who also received divine revelation, Moses for instance Deuteronomy 33:1, Joshua 14:6, David is called in man of God in 2 Chronicles 8:14 and Nehemiah 12:24, Shemaiah who we don't know much about gets this label in 1 Kings 12:22, Elijah and Elisha 1 and 2 Kings respectively. So you can have a known figure called man of God and what's interesting is other than David in that list, those people are also called prophets. That was part of the question, *nabi* as prophet. We'll get to that in a moment. So right away we can see there's some overlap there. And thirdly, sometimes the phrase's used of an unidentified figure who speaks for God or who could receive divine information, divine revelation.

And probably the textbook example this is 1 Samuel 9 when an unidentified man of God tells Saul about the donkeys and all this sort of thing. So what is a man of God? It's somebody who was perceived as being God's spokesperson and could receive divine revelation, divine information and may or may not be also called a *nabi*, a prophet. So there's some overlap there. Prophets as I've wrote in Unseen Realm and commented elsewhere, prophets are people who speak for God. Now what these other terms you're going to get us into though is not so much the reception of divine information but the how. Is it through a vision, dream, an auditory voice, a divine encounter, casting lots, or some other form of divination?

That's where you get some of this other vocabulary that sort of focuses attention on the how, how are they getting divine revelation. So the question referenced a few these terms but I'll just hit a couple myself here. We have *chazown* in Hebrew, which is from the verb *chazah*, to see or to have a vision. The term's used a few times in tandem with *re'eh*, which is from *ra'ah*, to see, so a seer is another term and *nabi* of course which is prophet. It's interesting in 1 Chronicles 29:29 *re'eh*, and I'm trying to think here. Let me just click out to the verse because sometimes they overlap as synonyms and in other cases, it depends which one it is. So 1 Chronicles 29:29 is worth bringing up. It says this.

<sup>29</sup> Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the Chronicles of Samuel the seer [*re'eh*], and in the Chronicles of Nathan the prophet [*nabi*], and in the Chronicles of Gad the seer [*chazah*],

**MSH:** So we have two seers here but the terms are different. They're obviously is sort of using tandem here. And one of the seers, Samuel is elsewhere called a prophet, the terms don't completely overlap because Nathan is distinguished from Gad in other passages. You have prophets and seers, in some cases, both of those labels can be attributed to one person and in other passages they are kept separate. One guy's a prophet. The other guy's the seer. So it's hard to know, let me just put it this way. It's kind of hard to be categorical and say this one couldn't be that one just en total because there is overlap but there are circumstances where perhaps a person was perceived as one thing and not the other. It is just hard to tell if there's any real consistency here but there are patterns at least.

In the monarchy narratives, what scholars would refer to as the Deuteronomistic history and what the lay reader would refer to as the historical text, historical books, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, that sort of thing. In those books, prophet and seer are frequently distinguished. Nathan and Gad would be an example. They are mentioned together in a verse but one is a prophet, the other's a seer. I think what we have going on here in situations like that is prophets were oracles. They did get divine information. God spoke to them. Word of the Lord came to

such and such and said go over and talk to the king. That does happen. But seers that terminology, often has something to do with either a vision or a dream or something like that. So it's really kind of the mode of revelation that is being highlighted or distinguished, kind of a subset when we get to this other terminology. We're not saying that prophets couldn't have visions. All we're saying is that while the *nabi* could have a vision, the prophet can have a vision. When the terms seer is used, that's sort of what that person is known for.

That's how to the community that it has become known that this person receives divine information. It's through this *modus operandi*, that sort of thing. One of the sub-questions I think was about are seers akin to shamans or people who use of methods of divination. There seems to be a relationship there so that seems to be the case. Another term is *qesam* or *qesem*. English translations would be something like medium. Let's just go to the one interesting example here. You have soothsayer, diviner, medium, just any English translations vary so much. So 1 Samuel 28, this is the medium at Endor passage which I've referenced a lot because of the *elohim* reference here with the deceased Samuel. But in verse 8 we have,

<sup>8</sup> So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night. And he said, "Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you."

**MSH:** So the command there to divine is the Hebrew lemma *qesam*. So right away there's this association of some methodology to solicit the other side and to get divine information. *Qesam* is typically negative. Here we have the medium at Endor. She's going to be a questionable negative figure because of what she's doing, communicating with spirits and whatnot. Deuteronomy 18:10-14 use this for forbidden practices. So *qesam* is a term and a notion that would often be used to reference things that are forbidden or pagan methods of divination or whatnot. Some scholars have speculated, and there's no way to really nail this down, that *qesam* could mean to cut in pieces and that would be a reference to creating objects of wood whether they be lots that are cast or even arrows.

There's an episode where the prophetic figure asked the king to throw down some arrows here as a sign, that sort of thing, wooden objects that were used to cast lots in some way or to read in an oracular sense. Scholars aren't really sure about that whether *qesam* actually means that sort of thing or not but it is associated with doing something to solicit divine information. For those who are interested in this, I can't post the book. I did a paper on the Old Testament response to pagan divination where I pointed out some of these divination methods that are condemned in Deuteronomy 18 are actually approved elsewhere of prophetic figures, so the paper addresses why that is. It has to do with who's the source of the information.

Is it the true God or something else? It has said Divine Council implications in there. So that's something I could put with this episode to post but there's actually a book. If those of you who have access to the Divine Council bibliography, there's a whole book on divination by Ann Jeffers that I found somewhere but the book is in PDF form and it's part of that collection so you could go look that up. These aren't the only sources on divination and these kinds of terms. I like Jeffers book because she's really succinct discussions on all of the terms that are associated in any way with these sorts of individuals, seers, prophets, that sort of thing, and also the terminology of divination. It's really a nice work.

**TS:** Tami has a question regarding John 9:1-7. Is there any significance to the clay that Jesus spit on to heal the blind man? He had just left the temple on the Sabbath when he healed the man. So being in Jerusalem, he was on God's turf. Was this another message slight to the powers and principalities of a heavenly spiritual nature that they got and we didn't? I understand that Jesus used spit other times to heal people and I understand the Levitical law about spit but do you know if there is any deeper meaning to the fact he used the dirt clay of Jerusalem to mix with his spit to perform the healing?

**MSH:** Well, if there is, it would be pretty oblique and you'll understand that by the time I get to the end of the answer. On the one hand, I don't think there's anything clearly going on here with cosmic geography because there's no indication that the blindness was caused by the powers of darkness. If you had that element in there, then I could see some sort of cosmic geographical sign or confrontation here. But we don't have that. Tammy mentioned the Old Testament comments about saliva. In the Old Testament, saliva could convey ritual uncleanness if this person spitting had been unclean, if they had been in unclean status. That person's spit would render in theory someone else unclean. The verse for that is Leviticus 15:8 for example,

<sup>8</sup> And if the one with the discharge spits on someone who is clean, then he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening.

**MSH:** It you could render someone unclean. That's interesting because the unclean status typically takes the discussion into, let me rephrase that or put it this way. Some scholars see a parallel to this and it's going to sound odd, but they see a parallel to this with when Jesus heals the leper. You recall leprosy obviously, you can't touch a leper because they become unclean. So when Jesus does this, he's asked by the leper if you will you can heal me and Jesus says yes I'm willing to do that and he touches the leper and heals him. So on the one hand when Jesus does this, it kind of renders the uncleanness point moot because as soon as he touches the guy he's healed. Is he really in contact with unclean person or not? Some people think that because spit is referenced in Leviticus as possibly rendering someone unclean, that when Jesus use it the teaching point about that and the leper is really the same. In other words, that Jesus is a higher authority than the normal priest who would be using Mosaic law to determine whether you should or shouldn't do something like that. So by using saliva to cure the man or by touching the leper, Jesus is presented or is presenting himself as someone having some sort of unusual or inordinate spiritual authority because it basically amounts to Jesus saying I'm unaffected by these Levitical taboos. I transcend them.

And watch because I'm going to do this act and sort of the question becomes moot because this person is healed now. That's possible. Scholars go there because they're looking for a parallel to do this unusual incident with using of the spit and they find Leviticus 15 and they start thinking maybe this is kind of like the leprosy incident. It's possible. I don't think it's that strong of a connection but I think it's on the table. Saliva was regarded by some rabbis as having healing properties. In other words, the spit of a person who wasn't unclean is a different matter and you can actually find in rabbinic tradition references to saliva being an agent of healing. So

I'm just going to give the abbreviation, BAT 126B. I can't remember what that stands for in the Talmud but it says this.

“The saliva of the firstborn of a father heals specifically diseases of the eye but the saliva of the firstborn of the mother does not heal.”

**MSH:** It's just a rabbinic opinion but it shows that at least some Jews were thinking that it had healing properties. Now the interesting part of this is that it's the first born of a father. And so is Jesus doing this because of this Jewish notion that the first born in his case of the father, which he has claim for himself, is a healer, which would be associated with the Messiah. Does this act kind of reinforce his messianic status and his claim to be the son of God? I think that's on the table and it's possible. On the other hand, you had other rabbis that condemned the saliva because pagans often use alive in their healing rituals and so some rabbis were skittish over it. Rabbi Akiva has a famous sentence about this that we shouldn't be doing this. So who really knows? I think there's a more interesting parallel or backdrop to this other than this set of possibilities.

There was a recent article, this is 2013 so it's just the last couple years, in Journal of Biblical literature where the author happened to notice this spit language is actually in a few Dead Sea Scroll texts. The article, it's not something I can post as it's not public domain. The article I just give you the gist of it. There was an old interpretation of this passage, John 9 with the spit from Irenaeus. Irenaeus taught that Jesus use of clay, the spit used to form the clay to heal the man born blind alluded to God's use of dust or dirt in the creation account in Genesis 2 where he creates Adam from the dust of the ground. A lot of scholars didn't buy that because it's dust. It's not clay. It just didn't feel right. Well, this article actually defends the idea using the Dead Sea Scrolls. Irenaeus gets defended here. What it amounts to, I'll just quote a few excerpts from the article.

“Both spittle and clay are similarly juxtaposed in several Dead Sea Scrolls in the context of the creation of humankind suggesting that John and the authors of these scrolls may have been drawing on a shared tradition that understood both elements as materials of creation.”

**MSH:** It's important to keep in mind that Ancient Near Eastern creation stories and myths also use spit and dirt and things like this. So when you go back into the Israelite context, these elements are part of the story. The main reason, back to the article here now this is another quotation.

“The chief reason scholars have been hesitant to see an allusion to Genesis in John 9:6 is that whereas it is dust, the Hebrew term there is *aphar*, out of which God creates Adam in Genesis 2:7, Jesus uses clay, which is a different Hebrew term, *chomer*.”

**MSH:** Now what's interesting here is dust gets translated in Greek in Septuagint and New Testament as *coos* and mud clay is *pelos*. *Pelos* is also used by the Septuagint in the Old Testament passages where God is described as a potter. Remember the potter and the clay thing,



the Old Testament casting God as the potter who molds the clay. And that's associated in certain contexts and instances when this language is used with creation. So you actually do have Old Testament precedent for clay talk with respect to the creation account and not just dust talk is what this amounts to. Now the two Dead Sea Scrolls that the article, it actually refers to more than this, but I'll give you two examples of what this author is trying to, basically how he's defending Irenaeus, defending this view from the Dead Sea Scrolls. One of them is the rule of the community which is 1QS for you Qumran fans out there. This would be column 11, lines 21-22 says,

“What shall one born of a woman be considered in your presence? Shaped from dust has he been. What shall humankind be considered in your presence? Shaped from dust has he been. Maggots food shall be his dwelling. He is spat saliva molded clay and for dust is his longing. What will the clay reply and the one shaped by hand and what advice would he be able to understand?”

**MSH:** So it's a clear reference to humanity being formed not just from the dust of the ground but spit and clay right here in this scroll text. Another example comes from the Thanksgiving hymns. That's 1QH, specifically in this instance, 1QH A column 20 says,

“What is he to do that he who returns to his dust? I have kept my silence for what can I say about this matter. In accordance with my knowledge, I spoke spat saliva one fashion from clay.”

**MSH:** It's kind of in an awkward translation or text but it's another clear reference to the one returning to the dust which would be humankind at the end of the line that humanity is identified with spat saliva and being fashion from clay. So if this is the backdrop, and this is Second Temple material, if this is the backdrop to John 9, I actually think there's a better chance of this being the backdrop than the rabbinic material because the rabbinic material is later. It might refer to some attitude during Jesus time. It may or may not. We can't really be sure but with Second Temple material, we can be sure of the greater potential for cross-fertilization here.

But if this is the backdrop, this idea of associating the spit and the dirt forming clay and it's an allusion to creation, that's really interesting because then this whole incident in John 9 would be casting Jesus as at least having power over the physical world as the creator did or even as the Creator. In other words, it casts Jesus or puts Jesus in that mold so that when people would read this or hear the story or witness it, their mind would be taken back to something that the potter did, the creator did. And here you have Jesus doing it, so it's a way to telegraph. And John is really well known for connecting Jesus to Yahweh of the Old Testament. John is very well known, the gospel, for really strong statements of deity and so this I think could be added to the list based on the association with the Creator, with the potter who molds the clay.

**TS:** Ben has three questions here. The first one is what does it mean to be spiritual? How does one indoctrinated with a scientific worldview begin to live in a spiritual way? Is it a matter of capturing some feeling or an act of the will or ritual or anything else for that matter?

**MSH:** I would say in biblical terms being spiritual means obedience and aligning your heart and attitude with God's will. In New Testament terms it's called discipleship. So being spiritual to me is having the mind of Christ. Look at the mind of Christ. Look how that phrase is used in the New Testament, being obedient to the will of God and aligning one's will, thoughts, attitudes to what God wants to God's will. So the words, it's a decision. It's not a feeling.

**TS:** Ben also wants to know what does regeneration really entail and how does it relate to being born again as the first Christians would have understood it?

**MSH:** Regeneration is basically to be made new, exactly what the word sounds like. Regeneration is to be made new. It is to be no longer spiritually dead to sort of state the antonym here. So to be made new, to no longer be spiritually dead but instead to have new life. Now it's not really an either or idea, like either the sinner does something to result in this or God does. A lot of Christian discussion this wants to either put in the hands of the person or put it exclusively in the hands of God. I would say it's both and. Regeneration is ultimately the work of God but God requires faith in the mechanism, in the thing that will produce the regeneration, which is the work of Christ. It's the work of Christ that's the gateway to the new birth. But you're not a beneficiary of that unless you believe. So it's not an either or. It's a both and. Now Calvinists like to pretend that only God is at work in regeneration. They define regeneration as being enabled to believe. So for instance in a verse like Ephesians 2:5. Just think about the wording here. I always have the King James in my head here. Let me just go see how the ESV actually renders this so I don't use the archaic English here. So here's the ESV Ephesians 2:5,

<sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

**MSH:** King James has quickened, you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. So the Calvinists like to look at this and they want to see that statement as the first item, the first act, the first thing that happens in a sequence of events. Calvinists like to take words like regeneration, repentance, justification, and make what they call the *ordo salutis*, the order of salvation. And they put regeneration at the front of the line because they want to interpret the term as God enabling you to believe. While you can read it as some sort of initial awakening act, the problem is that that this is sort of self-serving to the Calvinistic system. It's a little bit contrived. The problem is that the exact same words, you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, the same words can be read as an after-the-fact statement of being or a statement of a status.

So you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, why do I have to read that as the first of a sequential order of events? Why can't I read that as an accomplished fact after the fact? In other words, why can't I read it as a snapshot of the status of salvation as opposed to it's the first component in a chain of events that lead to salvation? This is just a Calvinistic choice to read it that way. If you actually look up the verb here, it's not a very common verb to make alive in Ephesians 2:5. It's *suzópoieó* and it only occurs elsewhere in Colossians 2:13, which is the twin epistle to Ephesians. A lot of listeners will know that Ephesians and Colossians are referred to as the twin epistles because their content is so similar, even in the same sequence of content. So here's Colossians 2:13, the other reference to this.

<sup>13</sup> And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,

**MSH:** You'll notice here that the quickening language is linked to union with Christ, together with him, union with Christ. It's not linked to some act preceding the union with Christ or that enables the union with Christ. In other words, Paul is describing a divine act that results in being united to Christ. You say is there a prerequisite to being united with Christ? Is there a prerequisite to being made alive? Well, yeah there is. There's beliefs. So Calvinists want to take the reference to the status of being in Christ and then cut it into parts, a sequential order, and then front load the regeneration idea and make regeneration some initial act of awakening. They do that because it helps make their system elegant and it helps make their system work. But what I'm suggesting is you don't really have to read it that way and there might be a good reason to not read that way. Just read it as a statement of a new status or accomplished fact, kind of view it as a completed thing rather than a little part of a sequence that leads to the completed thing. So that's how I would approach that whole issue.

I think it's a bit self-serving to take one term and a bunch of these terms used in the New Testament for the new status of the believer and kind of make an itinerary, the roadmap, some sequential order. But that's what you'll read in Calvinistic theology. That's where they go with that. The discussion before we move on to the next thing, the discussion is related a little bit, and I think the questioner brought it up, to being born again. The word again there is *anōthen* in Greek. It's an adverb that means above. Adverbs can denote place. It also can mean again, which is some sort of temporal reference for the adverb. In passages like John 3:3, unless one is born *anōthen*, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Both of those aspects are in view. Obviously, the above semantic of *anōthen* is in view because that's where the new birth and regeneration comes from. But Nicodemus, when Jesus says this to them, he's thinking of the temporal ideal. How can you be born a second time? He's thinking of the again element, but they're both actually present in the language here. Is born again a little point in a linear sequence of events or does it refer to a new status? I would say it refers to a new status. I think that's the more natural reading. But Calvinists like to take all of the salvation vocabulary and chop it up into a sequence of events because it helps them argue certain points of their system.

**TS:** Ben's last question is he wants to know what day did God create water?

**MSH:** If he's referring to molecules, H<sub>2</sub>O, the answer is we aren't told since the Bible isn't a science book. There's no Hebrew word for hydrogen, for instance. If you're talking about water in the experience of the writer that somebody might answer that's Genesis 1:6-8, which is the second day, let me go there and I'll read that just to refresh people's minds.

<sup>6</sup> And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."<sup>7</sup> And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so.

**MSH:** Well, you might think this is when God created water right here, the expanse of the up-and-down and all sort of thing. That wouldn't actually be correct because water is presupposed in Genesis 1:2 which is before any of the days are numbered. So we have 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, darkness was over the face of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." So there's water already there in 1:2. Now for those listeners who might be new to me or to the podcast or whatever, I have a whole lecture on Genesis 1:1-3. It's a video and I will give Trey the link to this video. But Genesis 1:1-3, if we're talking about Hebrew grammar and syntax, is not a linear sequence of events. What that means is that Genesis 1:2, the earth was without form and void darkness was over the face of the deep spirits are the waters, that's a parenthetical circumstance that is pre-existent to the first creation act which would actually be, by rule of Hebrew grammar, when I'm saying that I'm referring to the kinds of clauses that are in Genesis 1:1-3. All of that is parenthetical and a pre-existing circumstance to the first creative act, which is in Genesis 13, let there be light.

That is actually the first creative act in those three verses. And I know this sounds strange to those who aren't familiar with the grammar and have never seen that video. By the way, don't get intimidated by the topic Hebrew grammar and syntax in the video. What could be more confusing? Trust me, I illustrate it all in English. It's very understandable but because that's the way I'm looking and reading Genesis 1:1-3, the water of 1:2 is pre-existing material. It's prior to the days of creation and that's a long maybe convoluted way of saying that the Bible never specifically tells us when water was created. It's just there in Genesis 1:2. Verses like Colossians 1:16 make it clear that water was indeed created, matter is not eternal or anything like that. Colossians 1:16 says, "For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible." And so verses like Colossians 1:16 tell us that everything was created. We have Creator, creation distinction here.

The point is just that Genesis 1:1-3 actually informs us that we don't have creation out of nothing in those three verses. We have pre-existing material and water is one of those pre-existing materials. You have to go elsewhere like Colossians 1:16 for the idea of creation, the initial creation from matter out of nothing, God speaking it into existence. And I know that sounds strange because there's so much Christian talk about creation ex nihilo in Genesis 1:1-3. That is not what the Hebrew grammar and syntax teaches so don't blame me. I didn't write it. I'm not the guy who composed Genesis 1:1-3 but that's the way it is. I should add one other note since we're talking about ex nihilo. I don't want to get any questions about *bara*? Genesis 1:1-3, "In the beginning God *bara*'d the heavens and the earth." Well, *bara* does not mean creation ex nihilo and that's very easy to illustrate. In Genesis 1:26-27, *bara* is used of the creation of humanity, is it not? Well, yes it is.

Go look it up. But then in Genesis 2, both the man and the woman are not created ex nihilo. Man is created from the dust of the ground as we just discussed a moment ago, and woman is created from the side of the man. They are not created ex nihilo, out of nothing. And so that tells you that the *bara* reference in Genesis 1:26 that describes the creation of humankind cannot mean creation out of nothing or you have a hopeless contradiction. What makes *bara* unique for those interested is not the idea of creation out of nothing. That's not what the verb means or denotes. You would use *bara* as a biblical writer to denote an act of creation that only God could do. Only God is the grammatical subject of *bara* in the Hebrew

Bible. Nobody else is so that's why you would use it. You want to telegraph that this is an act of God and no one else could do this.

**TS:** Trevor has a question here. In reading the passage mentioned very early in the Unseen Realm, 1 Peter 3:14-22, King James Version Amplified Bible referred me back to Isaiah 8:12-13. I have no idea what Isaiah 8:12-13 has to do with 1 Peter 3.

**MSH:** That makes two of us. I looked it up. I have no idea why the editors of that given translation would link one thing to the other. These are editorial decisions. I don't see anything in Isaiah 8:12-13 that has anything to do with 1 Peter 3. I think that's the best thing I could say to that.

**TS:** Our next one is from Joel in the UK. You explained the relationship of the Torah to other sources and codes from that time period, that of the Sumerian King list Adam's descendants and how the ages and dates in the Old Testament have to do with numerology. Also you explained how Paul writes on the head covering has to do with the prescientific view of procreation. All of this is fascinating new information but my issue is I'm struggling to reconcile the doctrine of infallibility and inspiration with your explanations.

**MSH:** Well, let not your heart be troubled. The problem isn't the biblical text. The problem is that you've been taught a flawed view of infallibly and inspiration. Why would these things not be inspired if it's God's choice to pick people living in the first or second millennium BC or the first century to write something down and they can only do it with what's in their brain? And God knows that. He knows who he's picking and he knows what he's getting. How is that not inspiration? If God is the one who picks the person and prompts the person to write and that's what comes out, by definition it's still inspiration. What else would it be? If God is behind it, you can't call it anything else. The problem is that we've been taught inspiration as though it's been dictation, that God has to feed the words to the writers or somehow that God took a person and changed their brain.

He says well, you aren't quite as smart as I am and I know people are going to be reading what I want you to write in the 21st century, so let me download a bunch of 21st-century science into your head and now you can write. There is zero evidence for that in the Bible, zero, and there's a lot of evidence to the contrary to that idea. Why doesn't God fix people's thinking when it comes to, biologically speaking, what's the seat of emotions? It's not the heart, it's not the kidneys, and it's not your intestines. It's your brain. There is no Hebrew word for brain. Why doesn't God fix the writer's head in all sorts of ways, because he would have to make them modern people to do it? And if he makes the modern people to do it, then how are they supposed to communicate to other people who aren't modern using modern language? It undermines the very notion that the writers that God picked could write something comprehensible to their own audience. They're not writing to us but this is the way we think about inspiration and somebody needs to stop the madness.

God doesn't look at a person he wants to write Scripture and say I wish I could use you but I got to fix you first. I've got to make you something you're not before I can pick you, before I can use you. That is not the way God operates and we can tell that from the text. We can tell it just by the way God uses people in Scripture, just by reading how he does what he does. He takes

people where they are, who they are, and uses them to accomplish his will. And that's all he's doing in inspiration. When it comes to scientific stuff, God wants certain ideas communicated to people. Let's just say, the numbers in Genesis 5 I do think there's a mathematical cipher there. I don't know that we'll ever be a completely understand it. I posted on this for my blog a while back and posted an article on this. He makes a good case for a mathematical cipher. But even if you could demonstrate that this is what's going on, it is very difficult for us to know exactly how an ancient person would be thinking about this and what exactly God wanted communicated in those things.

We can pick out a few things and have more hits than misses but we're never going to perfectly understand in a case like that what's going on. Now if it's Paul with the head covering, Paul wants to teach some very simple ideas. He wants to teach modesty. He wants to teach sexual fidelity and submission in sexual terms to your partner. There's loyalty there. And he does so using the vocabulary that his readers would understand. What else would he use? If God just said okay Paul, I want you to stop here midsentence and I'm going to give you the Greek word for genetics, even though there is no Greek word for genetics, I'm going to make one up because I'm God and now I want you to use this term because in the 21st century, we need to satisfy readers there, too. Nobody reading Paul's material until we knew what genetics was would have any clue as to what he meant. The whole enterprise of communication, which is really what God wants in Scripture, why else create a written document if you didn't want to communicate, the whole enterprise is undermined by this thought that God is just going to dump modern knowledge that no one in the time period would ever comprehend into the brain of the writer just so that the writer could write it. But that is how we're taught and I'm saying it's wrong.

It's flawed, deeply flawed, and it sets up a situation where Scripture becomes an easy target for critics. Rather, what I'm recommending is let it be what it is. Just let the Bible be what it is. God comes to Paul and say I have a few points I want you to get across to the Corinthians because Lord knows they need it. This is one of the most immoral bunches that we've ever encountered here. They're struggling in their Christian lives because of all this garbage they had their lives before, all the garbage they're living around, all that sort of stuff. I want you to teach them a few ideas more or less. Now get that done. And Paul does get it done. He is able to communicate those ideas to his audience using the language that he knows and the language that they know, mission accomplished. So just to summarize this, I get this question a lot in e-mail and whatnot. Frankly, we need to unlearn dictation theory of inspiration and I don't care if your pastor doesn't call it that. That's what he's giving you, when he has to have God feeding words to the biblical writers and has to make the biblical writers what they were not. In other words, if God has to brain dump them to make the modern or write something that conforms to modernity, that's what it is and it's not correct.

And the reason it makes Scripture vulnerable, it makes the whole idea of inspiration vulnerable, is it's easy to demonstrate that that can't work. It just can't work. There are too many exceptions to it, too many obstacles to it. It's so obviously not what's happening that the critic can come along and pluck one out and just undermine the whole idea of inspiration. This is why I've said many times, if you strip the humanity out of inspiration, you undermine the doctrine. That sounds counterintuitive because inspiration's about God giving us information. But if you strip the humanity out, if you don't let God use who he was using the way was using them, you undermine the doctrine. And I see that happen all the time so we need to unlearn this. We need

to let Scripture be what it is. God picked people living in a certain time, a certain place, a certain culture with knowledge specific to that period, whenever they were alive, he prompted them to write things. He didn't change their brain or the content in their brain. If he wanted to do that, he could have but he didn't. How do we know he didn't, because we look at the text. We're looking at the text and the text doesn't have a Greek word for genetics. It doesn't have the Greek Delta Nu Alpha for DNA.

It doesn't have that. God wasn't interested in having a first century writer produce content for 21st-century readers because the content would have been foreign to the person writing and whoever the letter was to. This is a letter sent to the church at Corinth. What other language is he going to use other than what he knows and they now? If you're going to use 21st-century stuff, if God's going to invent terms and download them into your brain, why even bother? Nobody could understand it. We wind up being in a situation where we know we let people judge Scripture for not being what it wasn't intended to be. I have a whole lecture on this out of my own experience with an atheist or two. Why are you criticizing the Bible for not being what it wasn't intended to be? Are you mad at your dog for not being a cat? Nobody ever says that to them. No one ever points out the obvious to them. This is what you doing. You're mad at the Bible for not being a scientific document that gets modern science right. Well congratulations. You're criticizing it for not being what it never was intended to be. What else in life do you treat that way because it's absurd. It's an absurdity but if you want to resist that, then you make structure vulnerable. Editing, I could just go on and on with this.

Read Ezekiel 1, read the first five or six verses. Can't God make up his mind whether to use the first person grammatically or the third person? Was God undecided? No, there's editing going on. If there's editing going on, God isn't feeding them the words. Why do biblical laws sometimes conform to Mesopotamian laws? Other times there's Hittite stuff, covenant structures, could be Mesopotamian Hittites, Syrio-Palestinian, Egyptian stuff. Doesn't God have an original thought in his head? Does God need to quote pagan sources? Well, he sure does because he has to give him the words. He has to give the writers the words. The writers aren't thinking themselves. They're blank slates and God has to dump something in there. That bogus, it's bogus. God picks people and he prompts him to write the things he wants them to write, the thoughts he wants them to communicate. They use the words that are in their head that they know, the language they have, to communicate to people at the same time period. Otherwise, there's just no point to it at all.

**TS:** Our next one's from Michael and we actually owe him because he was on our 100th episode and we missed his two questions. I'll read them both here. In the Unseen Realm, Bible quotes are from the Lexham English Version and on the podcast, you use the English Standard Version. Is her reason for this? And what are your five favorite Bible translations and why?

**MSH:** This will be real short. It's actually Lexham English Bible, LEB, so for listeners, don't go looking for LEV anywhere. You can get the LEB online for free at different websites and whatnot if you want to look at it. But the reason Unseen Realm is predominately, it's not exclusively LEB but it certainly is predominantly LEB, is because it's published by Lexham, the people who published Unseen Realm and that's what they wanted. Now I didn't use it when I thought it did a poor job and they were fine with that. They just wanted predominant use of LEB. So like for Deuteronomy 32:8, it's the obvious example. I'm going to use ESV or something like that. So

there are exceptions but that's the reason for it. There's nothing more profound than that. Five favorite Bible translations, I don't have five. I'm sort of apathetic when it comes to Bible translations. I use the ESV most the time, almost exclusively, because I'm too lazy to try anything else. That's the one in my software that pops up first as my default Bible and I don't really bother looking at much anything else.

I like it because it's more textually up-to-date in places, like Deuteronomy 32:8 and Deuteronomy 32:43. It incorporates the Dead Sea Scroll readings right into the running text instead of putting it in footnotes. I like that but at the same token in the same chapter, ESV screws up Deuteronomy 32:17. It's an inept translation. There's nothing else I can call it so it makes me cringe in places. But I like it because of a simple thing like that. They don't do a lot of it but I just think that's kind of nice that they would incorporate scrolls right in there. I lean towards formal equivalence which ESV tries to pull off. Formal equivalence is the better term as opposed to literalism, instead of literalism. Literalism is a basically useless term, like what does that mean. Everybody defines it a different way. Formal equivalent is the translation philosophy that tries to account for each word in the base text, in the beginning text, Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, whatever it is, and tries to represent each word as much as possible without being ridiculous and awkward in the English. So ESV makes a good attempt at that. KJV is a formal equivalent translation.

The new King James Bible would be formally equivalent. NASB is formally equivalent but I don't recommend that one. That's probably an easier question, which ones don't I recommend? I don't recommend the NASB. To me, it's frequently awkward. It cheats in important places. This is the one that has the Elohim of Psalm 82 as rulers, which completely obscures what's in the Hebrew text. So I have an ax to grind there, plus it's so literal it's just awkward reading. I don't know any other way to put it. I'd rather use the King James than the New American Standard. Both the old King James and the New King James, I'd rather use than the NASB. I don't recommend any non-committee translations. There are some of these newer ones floating around out there on the Internet like something called the concordant version. I don't even know who did that. I don't recommend idiosyncratic translations or translations are produced by like one or two people because I understand how complicated translation work is. In a committee translation, you have lots of eyes checking the work of people and that's very worth doing when it comes to translation of something as large as the Bible.

But ultimately, I like to say that the best Bible version is the one you'll actually read. I don't really care what it is. To read any version faithfully is better than to read a pet version only occasionally. So the best Bible version is the one that you're actually going to read consistently. But I favor formal equivalence. I like something textually up-to-date. If you're doing this online or handheld, I recommend the NET Bible only because, it can be awkward in places. Every translation has problems. There is no perfect translation. That's a mythology. There never will be a perfect English translation. If I made one of my own, it wouldn't be a perfect translation because we're mortal here. But I favor the formal equivalence. I like translations that get you to other information and is textually up to date. The NET Bible I recommend even though it gets awkward in places. I recommend it because it has thousands of notes on the online version with it. And the notes aren't random or throwaway. People use pots and pans in the Old Testament footnote on the word pot in the Old Testament. They're not wasted notes like that. Lots of study Bible notes are waste of space. What the NET version notes are, they're either textual notes, there's a textual problem here that they'll tell you about, or they will explain why they translated



the verse the way they did in terms of what the grammatical options were and why they landed where they did. That's really nice and helpful and that was a committee translation and it's free. You can get it online. So I would say ESV, NET, something formally equivalent would be what I recommend.

**TS:** The last question's from Corvas. I know that many people are alarmed by Christians flocking to the book of Revelation. What about Revelation 1:3?

**MSH:** Well, let's look that up.

<sup>3</sup> Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

**MSH:** I noticed the verse didn't say blessed are the ones that obsess with figuring out the time of the end, or blessed are those that make their end times views as important as the Gospel, or blessed is the one who questions the salvation of those who doesn't agree with her end times theology. That's what I'm saying. I don't like an obsession of eschatology because all of those things happen and they happen with frequency, all too much frequency. So that's my concern. I'm certainly not saying don't read the book of Revelation. Scratch Revelation 1:3 out. Don't read it. Don't try to keep its message. What's its message? Be ready for the Lord's return and you can say that independent of any position on end times prophecy. What irritates me is that people, I hate to say this but I'll be blunt. Most Christians have next to no command of their Bible. Most Christians, here's what they read. The Gospels, Revelation, Proverbs, Psalms, and Genesis. That's what they read and frankly, that's a byproduct of preaching because that's basically what gets preached. There's a whole lot more to the Bible than that. And so I don't want people to be fixated on certain books.

When it comes to Revelation, there's this fascination and mystery and prophecy and all that kind of stuff. What's going to happen in the future? We're human. We want to know stuff like that so I get it. But what happens all too often is that people will get into it and then they'll find some teacher that presents to them this beautiful system, not telling them all the problems with it, and then that becomes part of their Christian identity, becomes part of their status of being a Christian, this particular view of end times. And when people object to that view or at least don't share it, since it's so tightly entwined with their identity as a Christian, the propensity is, at least in my experience and I've been a Christian for over 30 years here. I've have seen this happen a lot. But the propensity is that you tend to look differently at the believer who doesn't buy into your system and you wonder. You may not ever get to saying I wonder if they're really a Christian but you may say I wonder what their problems is. Aren't they studying this officially? Maybe they're not as committed or maybe they're not letting the Spirit of God guide them. Oh but for the grace of God, I would make the mistakes they make. I'm just so thankful that the Spirit of God is guiding me and I wish he was guiding the other guy over there but he's not because if he was, they'd agree with me. That's just wrong but I see it happen too much and it often happens with prophecy. And of course the focus point for prophecy is the book of Revelation, so that's what I'm concerned about.