

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

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“Q&A 15”

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With

**Residential Layman
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Q&A 15

Our 15th Question and Answer episode!

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 110, Q&A 15. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you?

MSH: Good, how are you Trey?

TS: Doing pretty good.

MSH: You have a productive week?

TS: So far, can't complain. It's getting hot here in Texas. Summer is fully upon us. We've enjoyed some wet cool weather and it seems that is over. Now it's back into the triple digit heat.

MSH: I wouldn't mind living in Texas so I won't complain about that.

TS: We got some questions here so how about we get started? We got two of them here from Seth and his first question is when Mike covers the kingdom of God and/or eschatology, can he touch on this idea of earth kingdoms and even in Hebrews where it says the heavens being shaken. How does that connect to the casting out of demons as well and ultimately the overthrow of Satan and other principalities, both at the cross and ultimately through the church in the last days?

MSH: The wording of the question almost seems to answer the question. The shaking of the foundations, shaking the heavens, that kind of language is in the Old Testament most closely associated with the day of the Lord but it's also associated with, consider the phrasing here, with the coming of God to Earth, which in the Old Testament is mostly wrapped up in the day of the Lord. But if you think about the incarnation, the ministry of Jesus and all that sort of stuff, you do have God returning to Earth in the person of Christ even though it's not day the Lord setting. We don't have a final judgment of the nations for instance. But we have both of those things going on with this language so when you get into the New Testament, you have the first coming. God returns to earth in the form of Christ so you have a theological conceptual connection with that. And the whole thing about it is, in the Unseen Realm I discuss a bit about how the casting out of demons is sort of cast as the sort of a stock element or part and parcel of the advance of the inauguration of the events of the kingdom of God because the earth has to be retaken, has to be taken back.

Specifically, when you talk about taking back, it is not to exclude the need for Israelites to come back in the fold because it's their Messiah. They need to believe who this person is since the Messiah is actually there. But it applies chiefly to the nations that were disinherited at Babel so you got this sense that the land that's not part of Canaan or part of the promise is under dominion of hostile powers of darkness. And so in the day of the Lord, that's going to be ultimately reversed. But now we have the kickstarting of the kingdom of God and the coming of God to Earth is part of this language or motif in the Old Testament. You can see how both sides, the inauguration and the consummation of the Kingdom, both sort of hook back into this shaking language that is for the most part associated with the day of the Lord but not exclusively. It is associated with judgment of evil, Psalm 18, for instance. God being roused to activity against evil, you can see that as part of the ministry of Christ, judging sin, judging

demons, and even something like the money changers and whatnot, draws on this image. So it's all part and parcel of the same thing. It just happens in stages but the language itself, to shorten the answer, the language itself is connected with the day of the Lord taking back of the nations. And that obviously in the Gospels begins at the first coming when Jesus is present.

TS: Seth's second question is a quick one on Psalm 82:5. Is this God speaking about the Divine Council being fallen, walking about in darkness causing havoc on the earth?

MSH: I haven't really dealt with this. The language of Psalm 82:5, let's just read it. This is ESV.

⁵ They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk about in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

MSH: I tend to think that it's not referring to the gods. It's referring to their victims. What would that have to do with all foundations of the earth being shaken and walking about in darkness? This language is used of sort of this cosmic upheaval that's solved. It's actually both caused and solved in a judgment sense at the day of the Lord. In other words, in the day of the Lord and the final judgment, God comes back and there's lots of big upheaval and judgment and violence. It's portrayed in this manner, the stars falling from heaven and the celestial objects going wacky. So this whole idea of the foundations of the Earth being shaken, that refers to things not being the way they should be. And sometimes it's used of God's activity when he's judging, in an ultimate, sense the day of the Lord because when God starts going to town on evil, then there's lots and lots of upheaval.

It's a cosmic event. The language can also speak to things not being the way they should be outside of God's judgment. God made the world work in a certain way and he wants things to work in a certain way. And when they don't, you have this language of the foundations of the earth being shaken or similar kind of language that what's happening here is contrary to God's will. It's chaos instead of order. When you associate it with the nations, it naturally gets associated with other gods because they're the ones running the nations that were disinherited. So all of this is contrary to what God wants. That last thing I said brought the gods into the equation, the most straight forward reading of this refers to their victims. But since the victims are in chaos because of what the gods are doing, they are involved but it's not like the gods are running around bumping into walls, that sort of thing, that they have no understanding, and so on so forth.

Now having said that, you will encounter scholars on the other side that basically this could either be a reference to the gods being judged, but then you actually get the judgment in verse 6. Some people would say that's out of order to have the judgment happening before verse 6 because that's really when it's announced. But the rebuttal to that is God can still be judging them before the ultimate judgment, which is taking away their existence or that sort of thing. So scholars are actually divided on who exactly is referred to here and do we even need to pick. Is it the people of the nations or is it the gods or is it both? To be honest, I really haven't settled on what I think here. One seems to be a more transparent option than the other but I think they're all in the picture. I want to go back to the first question and just mention that this whole thing about the day of the Lord, the Kingdom of God and whatnot, this language also is used in other

passages. It's not just Psalm 82 for instance. If readers go to Isaiah 34:1-8, you get the same kind of language where the gods are part of the picture.

Draw near, O nations, to hear,
and give attention, O peoples!
Let the earth hear, and all that fills it;
the world, and all that comes from it.
²For the LORD is enraged against all the nations,
and furious against all their host;
he has devoted them to destruction, has given them over for slaughter.
³Their slain shall be cast out,
and the stench of their corpses shall rise;
the mountains shall flow with their blood.
⁴All the host of heaven shall rot away,
and the skies roll up like a scroll.
All their host shall fall,
as leaves fall from the vine,
like leaves falling from the fig tree.

MSH: You get this judgment on the heavenly host as well. We know from other passages and discussions that the heavenly host and divine beings, those were two things that since we're modern, we disconnect them. We know about astronomy now and we don't connect that to the spiritual world. The ancient person did, and we've talked about it on the podcast a number of times. So that brings in the heavenly host language to this sort of judgment, earth being shaken, all that sort of stuff. Isaiah 24:18 shows some pretty pronounced examples, too.

He who flees at the sound of the terror
shall fall into the pit,
and he who climbs out of the pit
shall be caught in the snare.
For the windows of heaven are opened,
and the foundations of the earth tremble.
The earth is utterly broken,
the earth is split apart,
the earth is violently shaken.
The earth staggers like a drunken man;
it sways like a hut;
its transgression lies heavy upon it,
and it falls, and will not rise again.
On that day the LORD will punish
the host of heaven, in heaven,
and the kings of the earth, on the earth.

MSH: There you have both the human and divine elements. The point being that it's not just Psalm 82. There's language like this connected to the judgment in divine beings in conjunction

with the day of the Lord but it's also linked to the general judgment of God, God coming and being angry with sin and trying to reclaim what is his and assert his authority. Jesus certainly does that first time around when the Kingdom of God is inaugurated. So it would be natural. It would not be unexpected to see this kind of language connected to the casting out of demons and whatnot as part of that whole process and as part of the series of events.

TS: Travis has a couple of questions. His first one is if *eloHA* is singular for God and it's used for God at times, why wasn't used in Genesis 1, and what is the significance then for using a plural noun with a singular verb?

MSH: Well, from the way the question is worded, I assume that the questioner is referring to the Hebrew word *eloah*. It's not pronounced *eloHA*. That is used at times in the Hebrew Bible but it's also in the back of my mind that he might be getting the pronunciation from just taking off -IM at the end of *elohim* and then pronouncing what's left as *eloHA*. But regardless, the answer is basically the same. The short answer is that's just the way they did it. That isn't a copout or contrivance. Let read you just a paragraph from DDD in the Bible about this then I'll talk about it a little bit. DDD has this.

“The Hebrew word *'eloah* is derived from a base *'ilah* perhaps a secondary form of the Common Semitic word *'il* god'. Cognate terms are known from Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Arabic/Arabian. The relationship between the common noun and the divine name is complicated and it varies considerably from one language to another. In Aramaic and in the epigraphic Arabian dialects, it is primarily a common noun, while in Ugaritic, Hebrew, and Arabic (Allah 'the god') the usage as a divine name is clearly attested. There can be no doubt that the more common biblical and Jewish designation of 'god' as Elohim represents an expansion of Eloah, though there is debate both as to the 'meaning' of Eloah and to the origin of the expanded form Elohim ('God)’

MSH: Now, basically what that's saying is that's just the way it is. We know where it comes from. We don't really know why any given language did it that way. In other words, why you had *'ilah* expanded into -IM. It's obviously a plural form but why that expansion came to be just as good of a reference for the singular God of Israel just like *eloah*. Nobody really knows why. The interesting thing here, this is a very old PDF on my old website. I can appendage to the Q&A here if people were interested. You can probably go to my Sitchen is wrong.com website where I debunk the ancient alien ideas, on the page that deals with Elohim. What you have in other languages is sometimes you have the plural for gods used of a single human being, the king. Best example here is Pharaoh in the Amarna texts. The El Amarna texts are a correspondence Amarna tablets between Egypt and people in Palestine because Palestine is under the lordship of Egypt at the time.

The language they used to converse is Akkadian. It was the international language of correspondence and you actually have Pharaoh who's conceived as a deity but everybody knows there's only one Pharaoh. Pharaoh is referred to as *elanu* in the Amarna texts a number of times and *elanu* is the Akkadian plural for El, gods. It's just a way they did it. Why did they do that?

Nobody really knows why they did that. Now probably I think it's a useful illustration that the answer may be as simple as this is a device we are using to convey honor, in other words, it's an honorific, what philologists call an honorific feature of the language. Why else would you refer to Pharaoh as a plural as a deity as opposed to a single divine being? You want to make sure that he knows that you know or you think he's just awesome, and so you sort of up the ante rhetorically by Using the plural. That happens. Elanu, Pharaoh is a very good well known example to people in Semitic languages. Some say that's probably what's going on with Elohim. But the honest answer is really nobody knows for sure why this is done. Now let me illustrate why that sort of is what it is. Why do we use capital letters mixed with lowercase letters? Why do we do that? The Answer is because we do.

Somebody somewhere at some time decided on that convention and it stuck. So that's what we do. Why did Greek scribes move away from all capitals to use minuscules? There may have been some pragmatic reasoning. Minuscules are faster since it's kind of a cursive. But somebody had to decide to just do that and then the old way just went away. This is what happens with Languages. People decide to do things for a particular reason that may not be discoverable to us with any certainty at all. We can look at it and scholars look at this one. They know where it comes from. They know what happened. But we really don't know what went off in somebody's head to start that process. Elohim, let's go back to the question about Genesis 1. Elohim would not have been confusing to any Israelite able to read Hebrew so proposing another form would make it better or make it simpler or make it more comprehensible is just not true. It's not coherent because it would not have been complicated or fuzzy or unusual for an Israelite. It's only not clear to modern people because we're moderns. They are very used to the convention. There's no ambiguity about the term. There's no ambiguity about the grammar. Everybody who would have been a reader would know what that means. There's no point in talking about it would've been clearer if it would have been *eloah*. No it wouldn't have. It was just as clear with Elohim, clear to them but not clear to us.

TS: Travis' second question is how would you apply your perspective of foreknowledge and predestination to Jesus's prediction of Peter's denial? I'm not really sure I fully understand the argument in this regard. God's word to David led him to flee because God ordained secondary causes and his because God ordained secondary causes in historical contingencies. Predestination proceeds foreknowledge, not the other way around. The reason why God foreknows what is going to happen is because he predestined it. God didn't just know the Fall was going to happen. He ordained so.

MSH: This question actually assumes what it needs to prove in the question. In other words, God ordained secondary causes. You're using the word ordained there in the question to articulate the question so you're assuming what you need to prove. I simply don't share these assumptions and I would say that you need to prove predestination is prior. My point is that this whole thing about your assumption that predestination is prior to foreknowledge is not at all self-evident. You're assuming it in the way the question is even articulated. The problem I have with it, other than passages like 1 Samuel 23 is that it gets you into territory like God can only foreknow what has been predestinated. But if God foreknows possibilities, they must be real possibilities. They can't be pseudo-possibilities.

If predestination precedes all foreknowing, then there can be no real possibilities to be foreknown. There can only be actualities. So it takes you into some real muddy theological waters that on the surface, because the way the question's articulated, sounds like a really coherent question. But you're assuming in part of the question what you need to prove as far as your position that you're asking the questions from. So all of that, this whole idea that if you really want to say that God foreknows possibilities, too, and we frontload predestination, then they're not really possibilities, are they, because they're either predestinated or not. If they're not predestinated, they can't be a possibility. So God can't either know them or they become deceptions, lies, un-truths in the way Scripture articulates things. Take contingencies in biblical prophecy. There are contingencies in biblical prophecies. If this happens then that happens and so on so forth.

They're not real contingencies if everything is settled so the language of contingency then becomes either a deception or misdirection or boo-boo or lie or something like that. It also conflicts with a transparent reading of 1 Samuel 23. Here's what I mean. When David asked God if Saul would come down to Keilah and if its men would turn him over, God's answer was not no because I predestined that won't happen. His answer is yes, but neither of those things ever happen. So how can God, if predestination has to go before foreknowledge and if God foreknew two things that didn't happen, then how can they be predestinated? So you're putting this one cart before the horse and you're not carrying it out with contingencies and things that don't happen. If you do it the way you want to do it, let me try to restate that again. God's answer to the question is not no, those things won't happen because I predestined they won't happen. His answer is actually yes. So if this happens then that will happen. But if he's predestinated that won't happen and predestination precedes foreknowledge and those two are intimately connected, what is God foreknowing? It has to be predestinated. Predestination front loads everything.

That's not what you see in the text. And this assumption about causes and secondary causes and tertiary causes, those things just don't matter. It doesn't matter how many causes something has that happens. It's an actuality no matter whether it had one cause or two or more than two. The event may have been predestinated in my view or it may not because I don't frontload predestination, which was part of the way question was articulated. I would ask prove that before you assume that in the question. The event in my view may have been predestinated or maybe not. Events that actually happen could be either/or in my view. I'm just saying that events that don't happen but are still foreknown because God does foreknow all things real and possible can't possibly be predestinated because they don't actually happen. They're not actualities ever. So I think you get into several problems by frontloading predestination the way you do and making some of these little assumptions. It is hard for me to really state what I've said in Unseen Realm in this regard any better than what I've said it and that's not because I'm just such a wonderful writer but it is because lots of people get it.

They understand it and I'm afraid I'll mess it up if I try to say it another way. So when God foreknows things that don't happen, that proves that they weren't predestinated because they don't happen. If they were predestinated, they would have to happen. And we have contingencies in biblical prophecy. God does see contingencies. They have to either be genuine contingencies or there's something else. They're not genuine. They're phantoms, deceptions, misdirection, boo-boos, and mistakes. God doesn't make these mistakes. I think that the standard sort of super Calvinistic way of talking about this topic really handles contingencies

poorly, and the retreat is secondary caused, tertiary. It doesn't matter how many causes there were. The event happens whether there was one or many. There are contingencies regardless or irregardless of all this parsing of causation language. These are things that are put forth to try to make the frontloading predestination system work and it doesn't work well.

TS: Mark has a question here. I downloaded and read the article by Troy Martin on Paul's argument from nature for the veil from 1 Corinthians 11:13-15, a testicle instead of a head covering. It raised some interesting questions in terms of arguments from nature in the writings of Paul and how they should be viewed today. Paul was making an argument from nature but his understanding of nature in this passage would be one that would be rejected today. In some senses, this would likely be true of most any interpretation of the Corinthians passage. Few I think would contend that we would be bound to hair length based on an argument based on an ancient understanding of nature yet what would this mean for some of Paul's other arguments from nature? What would this mean for references to nature in Romans 1? I can certainly imagine individuals making the case that if we can see Paul's understanding of what is and isn't natural in 1 Corinthians as culturally relative that we could do the same with Romans 1. I'm interested in your take on this.

MSH: In part, the answer to this depends on whether what Paul is using, whether Paul's language is drawing on science of his day, in other words, is he using "scientific" knowledge of his day to make a point as opposed to sort of just referencing nature in general ways like we do today, sort of the nature as we experience it in the course of life or through our senses or whatnot, not talking about something being "natural" from a scientific standpoint but just sort of in the general experience. That's part of what we'd have to think about to parse what the question's asking. It's actually a really good question. Let me try to illustrate I think what might be sort of lurking behind this question. If the question is sort of referencing the homosexuality issue, then Paul's argument from nature is tied to his view which is derived from the Old Testament and not a scientific treatise written by Greco-Roman guy or any other guy. Paul's argument from nature is tied to his view from the Old Testament of why God ultimately created male and female, gender, and why he created sex.

In other words, Paul's argument from nature is about creation order, this phrase we throw around a lot. Creation order, male and female gender and sexual intercourse were designed to produce life, not only give pleasure. Sexual intercourse, which dispenses with the production of life, i.e. homosexual intercourse, was viewed as contrary to the creation order. And guess what, it is because it doesn't produce life. So God's gift of sex in biblical thinking isn't merely pleasure ourselves or pleasure somebody else. The fabric of creation includes and intends it to perpetuate life, not merely experience gratification. So you have to be thinking about how Paul, referencing the Old Testament, not a science treatise by Hippocrates or something, he's getting his perspective here on what is normal order or natural order, creation order from the fact that God created male and female and told them to be fruitful and multiply. This purpose of gender. Paul's life experience of nature, this is going to be what he experiences. People and animals have babies and this how life is perpetuated. This is very normative for creation order.

I should also say what I'm not saying. I'm not saying sex is only for procreation. That's sort of an old Catholic ethic. Sex is also for pleasure. Paul's very clear on that in 1 Corinthians 7

about better to marry than to burn kind of thing. He understands and knows by life experience that this is what a marriage is for, to satisfy this innate desire, this normal creation desire which in Paul's mind is an impulse not just for gratification. It's an impulse designed by the Creator to produce life. Paul says it's harder to fight against that. It is better to marry than to burn with desire and all that sort of thing. It legitimizes the fact that there is a desire. Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 7 that when you are married, your wife's body belongs to you and your body belongs to your wife. You get this gratification element in God's purpose for sex but it's not the only element.

There are two elements in biblical thinking. So a sexual ethic or practice that doesn't honor both elements is aberrant. That would be the point of the whole creation order logic. Now some people say there's homosexual behavior in the animal kingdom. There is, but that is also contrary to nature for a simple reason. A species for which homosexuality would be the norm would now be extinct. In other words, you must have both elements to honor creation order. Yes, animals do exhibit homosexual behavior. You have certain species that can actually change gender. Why, because they need to reproduce. They need to produce life. That is not the norm. Those are the exceptions that prove the rule. They are exceptions. They're not normative. They are exceptions. People would want to talk about whether that's the result of the fall. To me that's kind of a pointless discussion. You don't need to speculate in those areas just to affirm what is normal creation order as opposed to what isn't the norm. In Paul's experience, they don't have the advantage of having a PhD in zoology and all that kind of stuff. When he's arguing from creation or from nature, this is what he's getting at when it comes to sexual morality and sexual behavior. It's not just for gratification. It's not about you or your partner. Yes, God wants you to be fulfilled and gratified.

He understands that, but ultimately, this drive is wrapped up into and intimately tied to the production of life. And so in the ancient world, just generally. This isn't just with biblical thinking. Just generally, even other cultures that looked down upon homosexual behavior, part of the rationale was that it doesn't produce life and in fact, it produces death. I'm not referring to some vague abstract argument about HIV or something like that. That's not what I'm talking about. They believe that the man deposited the life form. He deposited the seed in the woman and then it grew. Think of the plant metaphor. We talk about a lot of this when we did Leviticus. There was this planting metaphor idea that when a man ejaculating into the woman, he deposited offspring seed. This is why the terms are the same in Hebrew, Greek and whatnot. He deposited the whole living thing into the woman and therefore it would grow in the woman and be birthed out. So when you didn't get kids, the ancients had no conception of male infertility. It was always a female problem. There's something wrong with the garden. I planted the seed. It's just not growing.

There's something wrong with you. If you think this then in terms of homosexuality, not only is it not consistent with creation order, why God created gender and sex, for two reasons, pleasure and the production of life. Not only is it not consistent with that, but in a homosexual relationship you would be essentially not only "wasting" the seed, but you would actually be killing the offspring because they have no place to grow, because your partner isn't a woman. That would have been viewed as something awful. So, yeah, not all of that obviously matches up with our scientific knowledge of where babies come from and what not, but the part that sort of transcends that, just a general statement is why do we even have sex to begin with and the answer is gratification and the production of life and you need both of those to be in place for, in

Paul's mind, for a normative sexual relationship according to the norms of creation order to be intact.

When both of those things are intact, then God is happy because that's the way he made things to work. This is the kind of approach, the mental trajectories and the theological trajectories that would go into something like that. If the question's really about homosexuality, that's at the heart of it. Paul's not offering an incorrect scientific assertion. That's not the basis of his argument against homosexuality. The basis of his argument against homosexuality is that it doesn't conform to creation order. If you want a little bit more on this and some sources for it, go back and listen to the Leviticus episode that we did in those chapters of Leviticus that deal with sexual norms. There's more to it. There's inheritance issues, property issues that deal with certain facets of Old Testament law as it relates to sexual relationships. But I think that's probably adequate for here.

TS: Bryant has a couple questions. His first question is does Daniel in Daniel 9 after reading Jeremiah with the knowledge of the 70 years coming to an end pray with Leviticus 26:40-42 in mind? And if so, is this the condition of repentance that God was/is talking about? Does just one righteous person pray for the entire people of Israel and God listens to allow them back in the land or does it require all the people to repent?

MSH: It's a reasonable and coherent assumption to see Leviticus 26:40-42 in view here, and I'll just read it.

⁴⁰ “But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, ⁴¹ so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴² then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

MSH: So that's the passage the questioner refers to. I do think it's coherent that Daniel 9 is referencing this. So there's this condition of repentance about being brought back and I'd say yeah, that's certainly part of the picture. The nation needed to repent. And I think that's the key. It's the nations. So it's not just one person being repentant and God says there's one guy down there, Daniel, I really like so not I'll let everybody come back to the land. Leviticus 26:40-42 consistently uses plural language, if they, their iniquity. It is consistently plural. So what God wants to see, if God counted noses so be it, but God knows if the nation, either as a totality, as a whole or most everybody gets why we're here and they're repentant, the standard there is up to God. But God wants to see more than one person. The nation, they, have to be repentant for them to be brought back into the land.

TS: Brian's second question here is I was curious about why Dr. Heiser thinks that there were lost tribes of Israel after the northern kingdom got carried away by Syria. I always thought all 12 tribes were still represented in the southern kingdom. That's where the people who wanted to stay true to Yahweh stayed at. Those who wanted to go to the north to follow pagan gods and those in the South who wanted to stay with the one true God. When the northern kingdom got

taken away by Syria, the southern kingdom still stayed around with all the tribe still represented, correct or not? In Zacharias 10:6, when Mike said that the house of Joseph was referring to the northern tribe, how is it that they come back after their assimilation into Assyria? This first talks about the house of Joseph being brought back by God but I thought it was only the southern kingdom that returned from captivity? How is it then that the house of Joseph is referring to the northern tribe here in this verse?

MSH: There's a bit of a misunderstanding of what I'm thinking in regard to the return element of this. But we'll go back to the beginning of the question. I follow the logic. The kingdom splits apart after Solomon dies and so the question is sort of think's like this or proceeds along these lines. So if you're living in the north, the 10 Tribes defect and form their own political entity under Jeroboam. Then Jeroboam sets up an alternative system of worship and so on so forth is contrary to what God wants because the temple's in Jerusalem. So if you're living in the north but you didn't want to be apostate then you either not worship in the north or move to the south. And the question assumes they're moving to the south. That's kind of a bit naïve. It might have been true, and this is all speculation. It might have been true when it happened. People have this sense that I'm not going to worship up here because the temple's down there so I'm going to move.

Now it assumes certain things. It assumes mobility like you could actually make the move. What if your ancestral land is in the north and you go down south and ain't got none? What if your entire livelihood, this is a subsistence economy. People are tied to the land. They don't just go and start another business or transport their farm to some other place. Mobility is not what you sort of think it was. That is a significant issue so it assumes a certain amount of mobility that may or may not be true, probably most cases wasn't true. It assumes that you don't, let's say you could move. Let's say you had a business and you can relocate to the south. You're abandoning your ancestral homeland. That is land God gave you. It's a sacred trust in your mind and so there would be a lot of people who say it would be a spiritually wrong thing to abandon your ancestral land that God gave you.

There's that issue. It assumes the ineffectiveness of northern political and religious figures, the authorities, to keep people in in the north for worship. This is what Jeroboam does. They have their own festivals and worship spots, the high places, priesthood, all the sort of stuff. And that is done specifically so that people won't go down to Jerusalem for the annual festivals and keep them up here. You say if you're really godly, that wouldn't work. That brings us to another assumption and that is you're assuming the ineffectiveness or the incoherence of the northern apostate polemic that cast itself as legitimate worship of Yahweh. How is that possible? They're up there worshipping idols and the calves of Bashan and Baal worship and all this kind of stuff. Well, to the initial generation caught in the circumstances, they would have known what's going on here. But the history of the divided kingdom spans a couple hundred years. So you have a generational change that goes on and the polemic is affected because some of the same language used of Yahweh is used of Baal in Canaanite religion. Even the use of bulls, think about how easily people were duped at Sinai, the golden calf incident.

Part of the reason for that is because one of the titles of the God of Jacob was the bull of Jacob, bull of Israel. Bull there bull here, what difference does it make? So there are things about Canaanite religion and the language used in Canaanite religion that was also used Israelite religion and that would've been blurred. In other words, the clarity of the lines over the course of

generations would have been blurred. And they're also going to add Yahweh to what they're doing. We worship Yahweh here. We might do it a different way than in Jerusalem but we're still worshipping Yahweh. There were different forms of yah-ism. We know this from archaeology that to someone in the priesthood of the Temple, someone who would have really been zealous about keeping the Law of Moses and all the rules for priesthood and worship, they would have rejected it. You have people distanced from that. Not everybody has a Bible. Nobody has a Bible. They have their priest. So the priest in the north for two or three generations down the road from the split of the kingdom. If you have a theological question, you're not going to say let me look that up in the Torah.

You're going to go ask your priest and he's going to say here's Moses and Sinai and what happened. We worship Yahweh here and this is where we worship in this temple, but it's the same God. What's the problem? A lot of the apostate worship is not overt worship of other deities. It was worship of Yahweh in abhorrent ways by the standards of the Torah. The question assumes that people are going to be able to parse this easily. They're not. They're going to have grown up with the language that their priest give them. They're going to have only their priests to ask theological questions if they eve pop up in their heads if they even care at that point because they don't have revelation. They don't have Bibles. They might have an occasional prophet running around the country saying what we're doing is wrong here. But the only way they're going to buy that is with acts of power like Elijah, things like this. This is why you had prophets because people don't have information. They've got generations now of tradition of this is the way we do it. We're two kingdoms. We don't get along. It's the same God though because we come from the same stock. We're all tribes of Jacob and Israel and God took us out of Egypt and all that stuff. So we have a difference of opinion here on the niceties of how we practice our worship to Yahweh.

But at least we're doing it, worshipping Yahweh. So it is not as clear-cut as you might think to the average Israelite. And so it's clear-cut in God's mind. It's clear-cut in the minds of the prophets who God sends to them to rebuke them. If you know about that, if you know you're wrong or if you become convinced you're wrong, then you would have the impulse to go to the south at least to avoid idolatry of the north. We can't assume that reaction would be a typical one or a frequent one generations removed from the whole situation when it would've been much clearer to see what was right and wrong. The whole thing about well, we go down there and people from the northern tribes are going to go down there and live in the south. Then maybe the south get carried away to Babylon and comeback. So all the tribes actually come back anyway. That idea actually isn't reflected in the language of the prophets, the prophetic books, who still speak of Israel in distinction from Judah. When you see phrase Israel or Ephraim and Judah, that actually means something. It doesn't mean that Israel is subsumed in Judah and we're just talking about Israel because we have to because it's geography. The phrase actually means something.

You don't really have a verse that sort of conveys this idea that all the 12 tribes are really resident only now in the two remaining tribes only Jacob or Judah after the exile. You still get both entities spoken of in distinction from each other and in combination, and with other phrases like the 12 tribes or that are used to link the 12 tribes. So that the language has to mean something and it does. It does mean something so we don't get that picture from the text. Now let's talk about the return, the eschatological element. These passages that we've been talking about whether in Obadiah, passages about Edom, our discussion about eschatology about what

is all Israel and the 12 Tribes language, the kingdom of Joseph and Jacob and all that kind of stuff. What I'm saying is that it's very clear that the two tribes come back physically from Babylon, Ezra and Nehemiah and other references. That's very clear. What I'm suggesting, though, is that the other tribes are scattered among the nations like the Old Testament has them and their return to Yahweh, and even in some respect their return to the land, is initiated at Pentecost. You have Jews from every nation, all the places where the other tribes, the 10 tribes, scattered. They were scattered in all these regions. Assyria didn't do things like the Babylonians did. The Old Testament describes this, too. The Babylonians took the people back to Babylon. You're going to live here now. The Assyrians didn't do that. The Assyrians took people from one conquered location and moved them to a different one. Then they took people from that location and move them back into yours.

They mixed the populations and they did this deliberately. This is a matter of record in Assyrian records and the Old Testament. So the 10 tribes are literally scattered through all the nations of the known world of the time because the Assyrians do that. It doesn't happen with the other two. They go to Babylon and come back. So when you have Jews later at Pentecost come to Pentecost, they're free to travel but they live in these nations. They come to Pentecost and hear about Jesus. They believe and accept that this is the Messiah of Israel come for our salvation and all the baggage that goes with it. This is the Messiah. There must be some things that happened later with the Messiah to restore Israel. They believe that. Then they go back to their homeland and then they become cell groups and become people planted in the nations to begin the return of the nations, the repatriation of the nations, the Gentiles, back to them. So when the nations return, we talked about this in our discussion of Romans 9-11, Paul quotes Hosea Chapter 1:10 for instance, and it's this passage where the northern tribes are now called not my people. Think of God saying you're Gentiles now. Not my people. Then Paul quotes that passage of the Gentiles and says now that God views the Gentiles as my people. So he actually swaps in the Gentiles into the people of God when he quotes the passage the way he does. And so that would include all of the tribes because they live in the nations.

When people in the nations start to come back to Yahweh, some of them are going to be Jews and every tribe's going to have some come back. So it's an eschatological return. The interpretive question, do Jews living all over the known world count today? Do Jews living all over the known world count as the missing tribes that didn't return under Ezra? I would say that it would seem so because that's what the Assyrians did. The Assyrians scattered everybody and they are involved in either the national conversion, "gentile" conversion, of the nations, the nations that come to worship Yahweh. If you have 10 tribe members among those then they're included. That is their return. So Pentecost starts this process, this thing, this redefining of what it means for all of the tribes to come back. The ones that are "missing" are among the nations and the nations are coming back. The gospel is for the Gentiles, too. And it's going to gobble up Jews from all tribes in it. This conversion process is not going to omit members of these other 10 tribes. It's going to include them and Gentiles, pure Gentiles if I can use that phrase that are not attached to the tribes of Israel at all.

They all come back. They're all one people of God. It's one kingdom. And since it's global, since it involves the nations, it is not tied to a specific parcel of land. So the return of the 10 tribes if the New Testament thinking or appropriation of these concepts is correct, and I would say it is because it's the New Testament, an inspired commentary of the Old. If all that's correct, then the return and the regathering of Israel spoken of in the prophets is accomplished through

the church. It is not accomplished through a physical return to Israel to Palestine. That's where the theological disconnect between systems of eschatology really is located at because the one crowd, just use an umbrella term, the dispensational crowd will say that these return passages are all future, post-1948, and all about a physical regathering of all Jews or tribes in the physical land of Israel. That is not what Paul says about what's happening with the church. The church levels all that. The tribes are caught up in the salvation of the nations with those Gentiles. They are brought back.

So the real question at the end of the day for eschatology is, is what we see in the New Testament, how the church fulfills these things, is that all there is? Is there any role for national Israel in prophecy or not? The replacement theologians will nope, all done, taken care of, done, story over. I think that goes too far. I think there are passages that speak of a future of national Israel in biblical prophecy. So while it's very clear to me that the church replaces Israel in some certain senses, I think it exaggerates the data. It extrapolates it unnecessary to say that Israel as a national entity has nothing to do with biblical prophecy in the future. I think that goes too far.

TS: Micah has a question. In 2 Kings 2:23-24, Elijah is mocked by some boys for being bald. He then curses them in the name of the Lord and some bears come out and maul 42 of the boys. As you say Dr., if it's weird, it's important. Why is this important?

MSH: It actually is important and it's complex. I think what we'll do here is I'm going to tell you what it's about and then I'm going to take a shortcut, even though in terms of time it won't be a shortcut. But there's a really really good article on this. And what I say as the answer to this will sound really strange but I'm going to read you parts of the article and I think you'll get the picture of what I'm talking about here. This is a complex issue that actually does have to do with cosmic geography and even more so, the denial of Elisha's status as the prophet of Yahweh and as a solicitation to Elisha to play the role of an apostate priest, to join the apostate worship, to join the other gods, to be part of that system instead of part of Yahweh's system, to not be Yahweh's prophet.

This is a theologically significant passage. That answer might sound strange to you but it is tied up in this cosmic geographical thinking and cosmic geographical language. Now the article I'm referring to or reading from is by Joel Burnett. I can't post this. It's not in the public domain. By the way, this is no relation to David Burnett. It's a different guy who teaches at Baylor. Joel Burnett wrote an article in JBL called Going Down to Bethel: Elijah and Elisha in the Theological Geography of the Deuteronomistic History. There's a lot in there that's going to be obtuse. Deuteronomistic to biblical scholars are the books of Deuteronomy through 2 Kings, the historical books. Think of it that way. Here's what Burnett says right from the beginning, the first sentence, and I'll just keep reading here.

“The statement in 2 Kgs 2:2 that Elijah and Elisha "went down" from Gilgal to Bethel has long puzzled interpreters. Some have assumed the passage must refer to a Gilgal in the central hills. Others, recognizing the larger passage's connections with the crossing of the Jordan in Joshua 3-5, accordingly understand this to be the Gilgal in the Jordan Valley and are left simply to ignore the directional difficulty.

While it might be tempting to write off the directional oddity as being the result of an editorial or traditional "rough seam," the passage's extensive interest in geography as signaled by its attention to a number of specific locations-Gilgal (2 Kgs 2:1), Bethel (vv. 2-3, 23), Jericho (vv. 4-5, 15, 18), the Jordan River (vv. 6- 8, 13), Carmel (v. 25), and Samaria (v. 25)-suggests anything but a random loose end. The enumeration of these points on Elijah and Elisha's itinerary indicates, at the very least, a decisive concern for geography in this passage.

Not only do the place-names mentioned in this text correspond to known historical geography, but they also all play significant roles elsewhere in the passage's larger literary context of Deuteronomy-2 Kings. The theological geography of these books-known collectively in scholarship as the Deuteronomistic History (henceforth, DH)-reserves a special place of scorn for Bethel, which stands in opposition to Jerusalem's unique status upon its founding as the one "place where Yahweh will cause his name to dwell" (Deut 12:5-7, 11-14; 1 Kgs 8:1-66; 12:26-33; 13:1-3; 2 Kgs 17:21-22; 23:15-20).⁴ The reference to Bethel in 2 Kings 2 thus invites consideration of any allusive dimensions of this text and the possibility that here as elsewhere in the DH geographic and theological interests are joined.

MSH: I'll stop there for a moment. There you get the cosmic geographical thing. There's something in terms of cosmic geography in opposition between Bethel and Jerusalem. This is going to take us into the conquest narratives, especially with some of these other places named in 2 Kings 2 because this is where the bears passage is found in.

These relevant literary and theological factors call for a reexamination of this apparent dilemma of historical and biblical geography. In view of the strong aversion to Bethel in the larger context of this passage in the DH, one might consider whether the reference to "going down" to Bethel might be understood not as topographically correct but as theological and polemical in nature.

As the following discussion will show, a complexity of narrative features in 2 Kings 2 works primarily to validate Elisha as Elijah's successor but also serves the DH's anti-Bethel polemic. Accordingly, the reference to "going down to Bethel" in 2 Kgs 2:2 is theological in nature. The recognition of the literary pattern operative in 2 Kings 2 not only clarifies this ostensible topographical oddity but also resolves other difficulties of interpretation in this passage, such as Elisha's cursing of the "little boys" (vv. 23-24).

MSH: Now, the larger point here is that 2 Kings 2 is a passage laced and riddled with cosmic geography and its implications, competing gods, competing worship systems, competing places of worship. Move ahead a few pages in Burnett's article, he writes,

Like Jerusalem, Bethel-which is second only to Jerusalem as the most frequently mentioned Israelite toponym in the Hebrew Bible-figures prominently as a sanctuary site in the central hills to which worshipers and other travelers are said to "go up" (Gen 35:1; Judg 20:18, 23; 1Sam10:3; Hos 4:15).

Thus, the mention of "going down" to Bethel from Gilgal or almost anywhere else calls for considering this directional language in relation to symbolic meaning at work in this passage and its broader literary context.

Commentators on this passage have recognized various aspects of a collection of narrative elements centering on Elisha's status as Elijah's successor.¹⁶ Those most apparent in making the case for Elisha's succession are (1) a distinct typology harking back to Moses and Joshua; (2) an extensive narrative symmetry; and (3) a polarity of "up-down" language throughout the passage. Those three central aspects of the narrative merit special attention in determining the significance of "going down to Bethel:"

MSH: It's going to refer to high places, going up or going down. Going down to a place that's bad, going up to a place that's good or vice versa, there's a lot going up and going down language in 2 Kings 2 and the whole Deuteronomistic history that transcends mere geography. There is theological baggage attached to the terms and the places. Moses and Joshua, I'm just going to summarize some things he says. Scholars have long known that Elijah acts in imitation of Moses. The way Elijah's described mirrors Moses. 2 Kings 2 models Elijah succession by Elisha after Moses succession by Joshua. Scholars have noticed this for centuries. There's literary parallels between all of these things, these people and the places.

In the conquest narrative of Joshua, Bethel is mentioned repeatedly in connection with Ai (7:2; 8:9, 12, 17). Like the fall of Jericho, Ai's defeat serves a paradigmatic role in Joshua, demonstrating the importance of obedience in the land.

As related in the narrative of 1 Kings 13, soon after Jeroboam establishes Bethel as a royal sanctuary, this in violation of Deuteronomic worship centralization (Deut 12:5-7, 11-14; 1 Kgs 12:26-33), an unnamed "man of God"-again, a term used later for Elijah and even more frequently for Elisha (see above)-calls out against the altar at Bethel, predicting Josiah's defilement and destruction of the altar and sanctuary site to come three centuries later (1 Kgs 13:1-3; 2 Kgs 23:15-20). As is evident here and in other places, for the DH Bethel

is uniquely emblematic of disobedience to Israel's God. Bethel thus occupies a special place of scorn in the sacred geography of the DH.

MSH: Burnett will go along and say it's an archetype. Now let's go to the bears thing where the question actually rests. The term there that gets translated little boys does mean little boys. They come out of the city and they meet Elisha on the road. Here's what Burnett writes.

The significance of this grisly episode comes into focus with some attention to the expression. The traditional interpretation that the males thus denoted are children derives from a literal translation of the phrase. On the other hand, Gen 37:2 describes Joseph at the age of seventeen. Solomon, at the beginning of his rule, calls himself (1 Kgs 3:7). Hadad the Edomite is when Yahweh raises him up as an adversary against Solomon and he escapes to Egypt, where he marries the pharaoh's sister-in-law (1 Kgs 11:14-17).

This language for young adult males derives from the social context of the "house of the father", the basic unit of ancient Israelite social organization. Accordingly, the term is applied to an unmarried male who has not yet become the head of a household. Lawrence E. Stager provides a biblical example of this language, explaining, "David, the last-born of Jesse, was not the 'smallest' but the 'youngest' of Jesse's eight sons, when he fought Goliath (1 Sam 16:11; 17:31):" As Stager explains, such younger sons within the household, having no prospects for inheritance, found status, wealth, and prestige in military, government, and priestly service.

The other term for this group harassing Elisha is (v. 24), which at first glance also would seem to indicate that these "lads" are children. On the other hand, is also used twice in 1 Kings 12 as the sole designation for Rehoboam's younger advisors, contemporaries who had grown up with him (vv. 8, 10). In the DH and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible these terms are used to designate young adult males, usually with royal associations. Accordingly, the group of males who confront Elisha in 2 Kings 2, far from being little children, are young men of the royal and perhaps priestly establishment at Bethel.

Against this group of young men, Elisha pronounces a fatal curse "in the name of Yahweh" (v. 24). The number of them killed, forty-two, is also the number of young men of Judean royalty and with connections to the house of Omri whom Jehu slaughters later in the narrative (10:14). Forty-two figures regularly in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East as a symbolic number of potential blessing or curse, confirming that the disaster was the result neither of a natural coincidence nor the prophet's own caprice but of divine intent.

Specific reasons for Yahweh's assault against the "young men" of Bethel are reflected in their words to Elisha.

In addressing the prophet, they call him "baldy" (v. 23). Among the various possibilities suggested for the name-calling's precise nuance is that it involves a contrast to the description of Elijah as hairy (1:8), a contrast that suggests a challenge to Elisha's authority. In any case, the verb ("to mock, spurn, make fun of") makes clear that the "young men" address the prophet with reproach. This treatment stands in sharp contrast to Elisha's reception by the "sons of the prophets" from Jericho who declare before the prophet, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha;" and bow to the ground before him (2:15).

The doubled form of their adjuration-"Go up, baldy! Go up, baldy!" and the related dual agency of their destruction (two bears) corresponds to the twofold nature of the speech and divine punishment against other groups of young men with royal associations, namely, the two groups of fifty royal soldiers and their captains who gave Elijah the directive to "come down" (1:9, 11). Linking chs. 1 and 2, the doubled command to Elijah bears an inverse correspondence to the twofold demand that Elisha "go up:'.

As part of the reproachful speech of the "boys" of Bethel, the word to Elisha to "go up" plays as a mocking admonition against his legitimacy as Yahweh's prophet. Those who find themselves cursed by Yahweh are those who call for the prophet to "go up" to Bethel, language that elsewhere refers to worship at the sanctuary site. The conquest that Elisha brings is aimed at the northern Israelite ruling house and its royal sanctuary at Bethel.

In sum, those who suffer Elisha's curse and die in 2 Kings 2 are not children but a group of young adult males connected with the royal sanctuary of Bethel, who offer reproach rather than recognition of Elisha's mission as Yahweh's prophet and who call for the prophet to worship at Bethel. Like Jehu's purge, the cursing and slaying are part of the conquest Elisha brings. Though Bethel itself still stands (as it will after Jehu), 2 Kings 2 shows that, unlike Jericho, Bethel remains a city and sanctuary under curse, doomed for destruction-destruction that will finally occur with the DH's second-greatest king, Josiah.

MSH: When Elisha calls out these bears and they kill the 42, it's an attack against the Royal household of the northern kingdom and its apostate priesthood. And all of that is tied with terminology like place name geography with directional words like go up and come down. This is a really complex issue because it has a lot to do with literary analysis. I think in the portions I read here I'm hoping you got the gist of it here. This is not a random act of cruelty. This is not

Elisha just gets torqued and I'm going to kill those kids. Who they are and what they do in the way they speak to him not only dishonor him as a prophet of Yahweh but they dishonor Yahweh, and further, they link Elisha personally with the other gods who are being worshipped at Bethel. It's a smack in the face to Yahweh worship and Yahweh himself and Yahweh's prophet and the geography is just part of what's going on. What Burnett does in the article is he links 2 Kings 2 to earlier episodes of Elijah, Elisha, and back to Joshua's conquest of Jericho, which is tied back to Moses and how Moses is tied to Elijah and Elisha. It's really complex. If you like literary analysis, I could send you this article in an email but I can't post it. It's weird and it's important theologically.