

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 128

Conference Interviews, Part 1

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Guests: Dr. Carl Sanders (CS), Thomas Hudgens (TH), Randall Price (RP)

Episode Summary

During the recent annual meetings for biblical studies scholars held in San Antonio, Dr. Heiser interviewed a number of scholars about their recent work. In this first installment, we hear from Dr. Carl Sanders and Thomas Hudgens (respectively, professors of Theology and New Testament at Lancaster Bible College & Graduate School), and Randall Price of World of the Bible Ministries.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 128, "Conference Interviews, Part 1." I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! We're here live at ETS!

MH: Yes... what do you know? Another year at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting. Last year we did something a little bit primitive where I walked around and tried to capture people and say, "Hey, why are you here? Why do you come to this thing? What are you doing?" This year we're going to make a real effort to get a little more substantive in our interviews. In this first one, we're going to be talking to Carl Sanders and Thomas Hudgens. Both of these gentlemen teach at Capitol Seminary... Well, Thomas teaches at Capitol. Carl used to teach at Capitol but he's now affiliated with Lancaster Seminary. They sort of merged. So both of them are colleagues together. Then we'll also be talking to Randall Price. Randall is an adjunct online (like I am with Liberty University) but he also spends some green campus time at Liberty teaching occasionally. But he's more known for his own personal ministry: World of the Bible. So Carl Sanders, Thomas Hudgens, and Randall Price on this episode.

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MH: Well, we're here at ETS and we have two guests for this segment of the podcast interviews. One is Carl Sanders and our second guest is Thomas

Hudgens. Carl, we'll start with you. Carl and I have a long history together, but just introduce yourself briefly and then we'll have Thomas do the same.

CS: Okay, I'm a professor of theology primarily at Capitol Seminary and Graduate School (just outside of D.C.). Mike and I have known each other for decades, I think.

MH: It *is* that long!

CS: It is that long. It's amazing. We've had some interesting experiences along the way.

MH: Thomas?

TH: My name is Thomas Hudgens. I teach at Capitol Seminary and Graduate School in the environs of D.C. I teach New Testament and Greek and just enjoy spending lots of quality time with Carl Sanders (laughter), whose office is right beside mine.

MH: Oh, my. That explains a whole lot here! (laughs)

Well, I wanted to talk to you guys about biblical language learning. We'll just keep it simple that way. This was in part driven by an email I got from Carl, who said... Now you just gave the paper, right?

CS: Yeah, yesterday afternoon.

MH: Thomas was sort of your partner in crime?

CS: I think we could say that safely, yes.

MH: This has turned out to be a really controversial paper. So Carl, why don't you give people the gist of the paper and that'll get us into the topic?

CS: Yes, the paper dealt with pedagogy for teaching biblical languages. Part of what drove this was some stuff that's happened at our school in terms of having to change our curriculum, having to redesign things. We had to do some really non-traditional things, and in the midst of doing that and reading and trying to support and explain what we were doing, we ran into a lot of material from second language acquisition research. There are a lot of languages out there, and people study how people actually learn languages. The surprising thing we discovered was that it seemed like almost no one (maybe no one—I'm from Minnesota so I say "almost no one")...

MH: Trying not to pretend you're omniscient or anything. (laughs)

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CS: Almost no one who teaches biblical languages, apparently, is reading widely in this literature. So how people learn French and German and Spanish... There's a bunch of stuff out there and it's not being applied to how we teach Greek and Hebrew. Thomas likes to say, "Language is language. Learning a language is learning a language." It's not, as I say in the paper, a *heilig geist* language, nor a *heilig geist* pedagogy—a Holy Ghost language or a Holy Ghost pedagogy. It should be the same! It should work the same. And so the paper basically does a couple things: It talks first a little bit about how technology is changing education in general and how hybrid education (where we're using technology plus human judgment to do things better)... There's an analogy that comes from a work by Tyler Cowen who's a labor economist. He used a new mode of playing chess called "free-style chess," where players play chess as teams with multiple computer programs, and the best teams are the ones that have multiple players and multiple computer programs. It's not one or the other. It's kind of hybrid. And he says this is how things are increasingly going. So the first point is that we need to think about what education should be like in this new age. And then the second part was just... In the second language acquisition research, the dominant mode of teaching languages in seminaries is what's called "grammar translation." You learn the rules of grammar: "This is a verb, these are the different kinds of verbs, these are the forms." In Greek you learn the verb forms. (lists Greek verb forms)

MH: You memorize the paradigm.

CS: Yeah, you memorize all the paradigms and then you translate really easy sentences (because you can't do hard stuff), so you translate "Paul threw the ball," or something like that. Then we say, "Now you're prepared to work in the Greek or the Hebrew."

MH: Yeah. "Now you're prepared for ministry."

CS: That's right. But the grammar translation method in general... linguists who study this say it doesn't work. It's ineffective. Or as one textbook says, "It's a practice with no theory, no explanation."

MH: That would be the controversial part. For listeners, if you've had biblical languages, you already know exactly what we're talking about. If you haven't, this way that Carl just described is the way that traditional language courses go: piles of memorization, memorizing grammatical forms and vocabulary, then you're supposed to sort of put that together. And you're right—you can only do that if things sort of follow an easy pattern. You never really get to... "Okay, well now I can take that simple sentence and put it into English. Or I can take this verse (typically out of John because that's pretty easy Greek), put that into English." And I never really ask the question, "Why am I doing this, because we already have English translations? So what value is there in it?" In other words, when do I get to understanding or seeing, apprehending, what Greek will reveal to me

interpretively? In other words, that's the question I want answered because that's really why I took the class. I didn't take the class to produce yet another English translation. When do we get to the interpretive value of what we're doing? Since that's not the norm—and you're basically criticizing the norm...

CS: You could say that. (laughter) Pretty harshly. There are some gut-punches there.

MH: So when do we get to the pay-off? Which one of you wants to answer that particular question?

TH: So I'm going to be... Carl is "Minnesota nice" and I'll probably be a little more rogue in my answer. Mike, if I could just tell you and your audience what most of my Greek and Hebrew classes were like... And I say "most." There was only really one professor that did anything slightly different in my life that made those courses of significant value. But just imagine going to a class and you spend 10 or 15 minutes where there's usually a "golden nugget devotional" using the Greek New Testament. You spend about 10 or 15 minutes taking a quiz, then you end up grading the quiz. Then the professor just kind of flips through 3 or 4 pages of whatever the grammar is that they're going to cover that week, kind of makes some observations: "Make sure you pay attention to this paragraph; You need to make sure you memorize this paradigm." And then for the next hour and a half to two hours, that professor will look around at the class and say, "Hey, John! Do me a favor: What did you get for Translation Exercise #1?" And that student, if he's done an effective job at translating will share with everybody his absolute most intentionally ambiguous translation, where every genitive is translated with *av* like "*av* Thomas." This is love *av* Thomas. Everything is "*av* Thomas" if it's a genitive, things like that. After he recites this very simple—absolutely ambiguous—translation, the professor will look around at the whole class and go, "Interesting. So does anybody have anything different than that?" And, of course, nobody can have anything different because they're only taught to do intentionally ambiguous translation. And that goes on for about two hours. So that's really biblical language pedagogy at most seminaries summed up in a nutshell. Unfortunately, when we figure out how much students are actually paying for biblical language courses, it turns into really an ethical issue. Carl and I have talked about that before. Can we really justify taking as much money from students as we do for something that has almost zero immediate transfer into local church ministry? That's a major question. I don't think most people want to ask that question, Mike. I think it's a scary question to ask. Every single course... all learning is the same. Every single course in our seminal curriculum, in our Bible college curriculum, etc.—all learning—needs to have immediate transfer into local church ministry and into the ministries in which our students are serving. Unfortunately, Greek and Hebrew get a pass and they don't have any immediate transfer. After all, nobody that I've taught is going out to an unreached people group and carrying over the New Testament into a language in which it hasn't been carried into. Now, translation programs are important, but by and

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large, every single student I've had is going to be going into a local church where Sunday they're teaching. Monday—you know pastors take off on Monday, they've got to relax a little bit. And then Tuesday comes around and they've got maybe like 5 or 6 hours to study their Bibles, and that may even get interrupted because somebody's marriage is falling apart and they come and knock on the door. And then maybe they can squeeze in a couple of hours later. And then they've got to go to a hospital visit. All of this stuff. There's no time, nor is there a need for someone to sit down and start from scratch and wrestle with the Greek text in a way that ultimately produces something that is more unintelligible than—I don't know—the New American Standard Bible, 1977 edition.

MH: I mean, the struggles here... This isn't going to be new to my audience because we've talked a little bit about learning Hebrew and Greek. During the course of the podcast I will use a little bit... You drill down somewhere in the text, you talk about a word and do a little bit of word study or you talk about a point of grammar. People need to realize that when you're in first-year Greek or Hebrew, that is not what you're doing. You never really get to interpretive payoff. Like you said, the little "golden nugget devotional"—that can happen periodically, but nobody's sort of coming alongside the student and saying, "Well, congratulations, Johnny. You've just given me the aorist active indicative paradigm. Congratulations! But here's where it really matters. Here's an instance where it really matters to know this form as opposed to that form. Or if you have a middle passive, here's where it matters, where you would interpret..." Nobody does that! So the kinds of things that you hear periodically in the podcast, that you hear me doing—it's going to sound really bizarre—but you actually don't get to do that (laughs) in most of your seminary language courses. It is rote memory. When you really get on the other side of it and you look back and you wonder, "Is there a way I can look at that and not call it pointless? I already had my own translations. Why did I need to produce something else? When do I see the payoff?"

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So our listeners are going to be familiar with what Johnny and I did at Logos. In fact, we just recently interviewed Johnny. Johnny is no longer at Logos or Faithlife. He has struck out on his own and has created a word study course that is two or three hours, I don't know—15 videos or whatever. It really quickly gets you to the things you need to know with specific examples and video. "Here's why you would care." But really condensing it and giving people a chance that they don't have to buy software and they don't have to spend hundreds and thousands of dollars in software. It's not going to take you the equivalent of a semester or 6 months to go through the program. "Here's just something you can use once you graduate from Bible reading. You might have heard of Strong's numbers, but there are limitations to that. Here's some other things you can do with free resources." But it's about method and it's about payoff. So that's a little snippet of what could be happening, should be happening, right from the first day in terms of courses, but it's not. So what I want to ask either of you now... With that sort of as a backdrop... And again, I've been kind of in trouble for this for a

long time and so has Johnny, because we've been very public about criticizing the way languages are taught—both inside the building and when professors come... It got to the point where I had to ask to not be invited to meetings because I didn't want to just go off and then hurt the company in some way by criticizing what people were doing in class. So we've been down that road, and online I've gotten into trouble here and there about this. But now you guys... to do this at this conference (laughing)... it's one of those, "I wish I would have been a fly on the wall" for that one. I do have the paper. I haven't read it yet. But I guess I could ask you, do you guys mind if I post the paper online, or are you going to submit it somewhere?

(unintelligible)

MH: Okay, then we won't do that. We'll wait until you submit it, and then we can hopefully get access to it in some other way. But just tell me now... I want to know things like: What was the reaction in the room. What do you think should be happening? And what's the pushback to that?

CS: Well, I think first to say there's an awful lot of skepticism. It's an interesting kind of skepticism. One of the points the paper makes it, "No one is assessing the current models seriously." The last real attempt to understand how effective these classes are for after seminary (what pastors are actually doing with these languages) is 50 years old. One of the problems is we're dealing with a black hole information-wise, so I think an awful lot of people intuitively know... Mike, I think, in one of his posts awhile back said that maybe 10 percent of people are using the languages effectively. Whatever percent it is, whether it's 10, 20, or even 30 percent... there's a lot of people who aren't.

TH: Ten percent is optimistic.

CS: But whatever the number is... I wanted people to say, "Well, I had this student call me last week and ask me some question about Greek. See that proves everyone is using it." (laughs) The logic there fails me a little bit. So part of this is just resistance. We're really doing better than we say we are, because I'm being pretty critical saying, "This really doesn't work and there's no reason to think it should work based on linguistics or anything else." So that's part of the pushback. The second part of the pushback we hear regularly is, "What about those people who want to be professors, who want to be in a PhD program?" (laughs) The problem is, that's not what seminary training is supposed to be for!

MH: "What about our favorite students?"

CS: Yeah, "What about those guys who hang around with me and want me to tell them all my golden nuggets, and they just want to bask in the glow of my wisdom and knowledge?" So there's a lot of temptation for seminary professors overall (particularly I'm thinking of seminaries) to want to produce professors rather than

pastors. And seminaries have a mission of preparing pastors. The M.Div., which is the primary degree, really is focused on pastoral preparation. So people are concerned, "Well, what about the one or two students in my class that might want to go on to PhD work? Will they be disadvantaged by this?" And it just seems to me that we've flipped things around. We're letting the tail wag the dog there. And there are just other things. "Well, you don't have any evidence." There's a sense in which this is true. This is kind of an experimental approach, what we're doing, where in just a 12-week total course, people are learning the whole exegetical method. They're doing text criticism. They're doing word studies. They're doing syntactical issues. They're thinking about biblical and theological issues related to that passage, and constructing an actual teaching or preaching outline... They're doing all of that in 12 weeks, which is turning thing up on its head. Again, it's very much about the tasks that they're actually going to do in ministry.

TH: Tell them about your title—the title of the paper.

CS: Oh, the title is just "Learning Biblical Languages By the Book: Rethinking the Status Quo." The point is that the Greek grammars, since the first one published in the U.S. about 240 years ago, have almost always been exactly the same. They start with forms and paradigms and they occasionally do nouns first or verbs first. (laughs)

TH: Or even more complicated is when they throw in the tracks, like "Turn to page 93 if you want John to go to the movies or if you want John to go to the store turn back to 104."

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CS: That's the "Choose Your Own Adventure" grammar, I guess. But anyway, it's been that way. We've allowed these books (which are built on grammatical features—that's their structure) to dictate our pedagogy. There's no reason (in any of the literature on second language acquisition) to suggest students actually learn languages that way. In fact, all the evidence says they don't. Let's face it, textbook authors and textbook publishers don't like to hear this because it really is an indictment of what's being produced there. By the way, this is true not just for biblical languages. It's for people who publish German textbooks and Spanish textbooks. They want one textbook that we can use everywhere, and that's just not how language learning really works. So there's a problem there. I just think it's interesting. There's a lot of pushback. And people will say things like, "Yeah, we need to make it more practical," or, "I'm with you partway but we're still going to do this ineffective model." So we've been struggling with that in a number of places, but the revolution is coming. (laughter)

MH: Did you propose a particular tools-based model? You mentioned this 12-week course. Did the paper in any part of it sort of try to build up that approach generally, or did you just sort of give them both barrels and then take Q&A? (laughing)

CS: A lot of both barrels. There's a section in the paper where I actually talk about the course. Actually, it's more Thomas' course, so maybe he'd be the right person to talk about this, but I kind of sketched out what this looks like. It covers a lot of the same material, absent memorizing paradigms, absent the translations. I mean, you're doing all the same skills. The problem is right now, while we wait until the third or fourth semester to do those skills... We're doing them right away.

TH: Which fewer and fewer are taking.

CS: Yeah, and one of the problems is people are taking fewer language courses, so if you wait until the third or fourth semester people aren't benefiting from them. So we're pushing all those things into the front end, and that's the plus side. We're heavily dependent on tools to make that happen, because unless you do the traditional model it's going to be hard to know whether this is a future tense or an aorist tense verb, for example, in the Greek. So we use the tools to help facilitate moving students to that payoff very quickly. But it's not just driven by tools. It's driven by this thought of, "What are the things pastors actually need to do with the language? What are the tasks they need to do?"

MH: Your average Bible student is going to have that question, too. Anyone who graduates from Bible reading... they discover that Bible *reading* isn't Bible *study*. And so they want to move beyond reading. Again, when I was a teenager the first book I ever bought (other than the Bible) was a *Strong's Concordance*, because that was what somebody told me to do. You get some use out of that, but you start to develop the intuition that there's a lot more to this than just being able to read. And if you really think about it, if the goal of your language classes is to produce a translation, that just gives me something else to read! In other words, it doesn't really take you anywhere beyond that. The person who doesn't have the time or doesn't want to spend the money to take a full-blown semester or year-long sequence in either Greek or Hebrew...this is the kind of thing that I think listeners can grasp pretty quickly. This is the kind of approach that they could use right out of the box, so to speak. Right out of the gate. "There's a method I can learn here, there's a tool I can use to get me beyond English that doesn't require me to reproduce English." Again, their own translation. And they can get some interpretive value out of it. So Thomas, what do you do in your classes, or what would you recommend?

TH: So we want to leverage every single second that we have with the students. And that means even repeating stuff that doesn't necessarily fall under a traditional Greek course. For example, in the first week every single Greek course—every single language course in the world—the first thing you're going to do is learn, what? The alphabet! It's kind of hard for students to go much further in the language in the first week than learning the alphabet, but it's not really that hard to learn the alphabet. So we don't really want to waste our time with the students, so what we do is we actually have them doing a historical analysis the

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same week. In particular, we have Logos Bible Software. All of our students have it. But you could do that with any number of tools. But we're reinforcing something that they would have had in a previous course—in a hermeneutics course or a biblical narrative course. We're getting them to sort of prime the pump. We're moving towards exegesis. The focus is not the alphabet, the focus is exegesis. Another thing... This is kind of odd, but I've never actually been in a Greek course where in the first week someone had to actually read from their Greek New Testament. It's pretty interesting that people can actually read from their Greek New Testament without actually being able to pronounce the words. When I first began learning Spanish it was amazing how I could read a newspaper and not even understand what I was reading. But if you know what the letters sound like you could actually do it. What actually is a better way to measure whether or not someone's learning the alphabet? Well, how about just try and read it? Then you can see it. If you're actually just writing letters down on a piece of paper, that doesn't tell me if you know what sounds they make. It doesn't tell me if you know the difference between a short "o" sound or a long "o" sound. The reason why I mention that, Mike, is because one of the criticisms that Carl didn't mention is that sometimes people actually think that with the model that we have, we're actually giving them less of the grammar. I would actually say, "What's harder in the first week: writing the alphabet down (regurgitating it on a piece of paper) or having to record yourself reading Mark 1:1-3 in Greek with all of the letters and diphthongs and all of the things that you find there, and then submitting that to your professor and having him listen to it and see whether or not you can do it without any helps, notes, or anything like that?" Much harder. By week two, we start looking at verbs. Instead of memorizing all of the forms for a bunch of verbs in the present active indicative or the future active indicative, we just want them to understand there's nothing before the stem and the only thing that's different between a present and future is the *sigma*. And immediately you can start showing them how to identify a future or a present. What's interesting... It's kind of how the Noahic Covenant (when you're doing the biblical covenants) sort of sets the framework for how you understand all of the other biblical covenants. When you start with the present and the future active indicative and you understand that you have a stem, and then you have a primary active suffix and the only thing that makes it different is this little *sigma* that goes in between those two that turns it into a future—that kind of paves the way for understanding all of the other tenses. You've let the parts of the language communicate different things about the grammar. The reason why I mention that, though, Mike, is because I want people to understand that we're not teaching a tool or a group of tools. This isn't just an exegesis course on steroids. You're still getting the grammar. My students are still memorizing 100 words of Greek per week, but in addition to all of that, the focus is on exegesis more than the grammar. So week three they're doing a word study. They're reading Don Carson's chapter in *Exegetical Fallacies* on word study fallacies. The one thing that pastors seem to never read for some reason is Don Carson's *Exegetical Fallacies*, and that's why you still get people talking about dynamite in local churches when they see *dunamis*. The Church somehow still means "the called out ones." These word

study fallacies are all through local churches. Well, we want them to actually understand what those fallacies are in our classes and we want them to see the types of tools that they can use to be able to do proper word studies.

MH: So if I were one of your students, what I might expect is... Okay, here we are in week three. We're learning some sort of grammatical concept or element. My homework would not be, "Go translate this or that." My homework would be something like, "Here's a form in this verse. You know what it is and you know what it isn't. Why do you think the writer picked this form?" In other words, you have to learn to ask good interpretive questions of what you're able to identify.

TH: In week three, for example, a basic thing is how to figure out which word warrants a word study. Helping a student with something as basic as that... "Here, take this discourse unit. Identify the two words in this passage that you need to do a word study on—that you need to dig a little further into the resources to figure out what this word actually means." One that comes up is 2 Corinthians 5:21, which is a verse that ought to make sense to everybody. If you shared that verse with somebody at the 7-11 it should make sense because it's actually the Gospel that people get saved by, but for some reasons in our translations it's intentionally ambiguous. It says, "He made him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf, so that those of us who believe in him might become the righteousness of God in him." Nobody knows what that means, but somehow that's the message that was given to the ministers of reconciliation, by which people can be saved. So I want our students to be able to go to that passage and say, "I don't need to look at the word 'the' or the word 'and.' Which ones jump out?" I want them to identify what those... What are the words that are worth doing the lexical study? They'll do that by the second day of the week. About the fourth day of the week we're going to dig into the actual resources that can help them get the information they need in order to think through the use of it. The meaning of a particular word in a particular context. But week three? Word studies by week four?

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We transition from lexical issues to syntactical issues. Our courses are a work in progress. And this is one example of how even we are changing the model that we're doing. I was asking students to do a syntactical study—identify a syntactical issue and flesh out the options using the resources they had (like some exegetical commentaries and things like that). And what I found is, everybody defaults to word studies. They just want to do word studies. So I came up with a way... I walk them through in a video two different commentaries. I walk through and as we're reading it, I go, "This is a lexical issue. How do you know?" Well it says, "this word means..." When you see, "this word means..." it's a lexical issue 99 percent of the time. Or, "Look in the parentheses how they're supporting the evidence for their interpretation. They have BDAG. When you see BDAG, that's a lexicon, that means it's a lexical issue."

And then when we get to, like, Romans 5... It goes, "But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," and you find somebody talking about the *huper hemon* ("for us" in that passage). And they're talking about, "How do we understand that? Is that substitution language or is that "for our benefit?" That's a syntactical issue because we're not talking about the meaning of a word, we're talking about how these words work together. And then I explain it, bridging it over into English because most people don't think this way even in their own language because we just learn to talk this way. I explain, "I could tell you 'I have to go to the store to get a present for my wife.'" What do I mean by "for my wife?" Well, I could mean two things: I could mean I'm going to go get one because I'm going to give it to her, or I'm going to go get one because Leslie told me she's busy right now and she can't go, so I'm going to go in her place. We're expanding this exegesis to focus on incorporating different tools that they would never use. Nothing against Blue Letter Bible or anything like that—nothing against any of these different resources—but we want to start getting people into resources that if they weren't in a class like this they would never use.

MH: That's good. I've often said on the podcast (again we had Johnny a little while back) that really the battle, either when it comes to a word study or a syntactical issue, some grammatical form... When you hear the word "exegesis" you should be thinking "the skill of asking good questions about what you're reading." Just becoming a very close reader and learning to ask really, really good interpretive questions. If you can do that, you're going to be miles down the road in your biblical understanding. You can go buy a bunch of tools. You can go buy a bunch of books (lexicons, grammars, whatever), but if you can't ask a good question about that thing you're looking at, that thing your software has located for you... And that's what software is good for. It *concord*s. Instantaneous speed. You can do all of that, but if you can't think well, then it really doesn't get you very far. I realize some listeners might be thinking, "Oh, come on. Surely if I go to seminary and I take a language class they're going to teach me how to think carefully and think well." Well, they might if you stick around for 3 or 4 years. But they will *not* if you're in a first year course. That is the elephant in the room. That's the dirty little truth. That is just what happens. It happens that way, not because professors are nasty... It just happens that way because they are imitating a model that they sat under. And they were the doctoral student. They were the one that just couldn't get enough of this and they went on and they did graduate work, so on and so forth.

CS: I just had a conversation the other day with a younger guy who's here at the conference. He's presenting a paper and we were chatting. He said he taught Greek in the past so I said, "You might like my paper or you might not" (being quite aware of other responses). I described briefly what it was and that we don't really do paradigms. He said to me, "I loved the paradigms. They were great. They helped me learn the language so much." And in my head I said (I probably could have said it out loud, but I don't think I did)... My thought in my head was,

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"You are *weird*." (laughter) I want to make it clear. I'm at ETS. A large percentage of the people here are weird. We're academics! We have different values, different things we focus on. It's really hard for us to separate our preferences from what is beneficial to our students. When you're weird and unusual and you have this focus, you have to say, "It's not what I like. What's really good for the students? What benefits them?"

MH: Yeah, I used to say that all the time in the building and even to students and online, as well. I was a language geek. I loved it. I loved the memorization, I liked solving the puzzle, all this sort of thing. I was weird! And I'm unrepentant. I'm good with that. When we created the *Learn to Use* thing and we had professors and we would try to explain this product to them—and now like with Johnny's word study course that we're trying to get people into—we would try to explain it that way. "All of us in the room here, we're the language geeks. We loved it. But we have to realize—we have to come to grips with the fact—that most people are not like us. It's just not right for them to be 'dis-served' because we were among the two or three people in that class that the professors sort of gravitated to because we were one of them. We were like him or her. This was just our thing." It's very easy as an instructor to just... You know, you look for those students. Those are the ones that you're going to pay special attention to. They're not going to consciously care less about the other ones, but there's going to be this fondness, this affinity. Like attracts like. That's just the way it works. What we would try to convince people of is, "Let's just change the model. Let's take the exegesis, the stuff you'd only get in the third or fourth year and put that in the first year. Front-load it so everyone is served well, and then the people who are just like you are going to come out of the woodwork anyway. You're going to know who those people are, and then you move them into a more traditional track because they love the memorization. They're just like you." But if you front-load the other part, everybody gets served. Everybody gets skills. They know why they're doing this. They're not going to feel like failures because they couldn't memorize all this stuff. Or even if they got A's in the class, at the end of that class (and it might be the only language class that's required, because most seminaries now, if they even require any language courses it's one year). They get to the end of that year and you ask them what they learned. "I learned how to translate. I can produce an English translation." Well, hey—right over there is a shelf of 200 of them. And if you put it in those terms, it's very normal to say, "What did I even do that for?"

I want to thank both of you guys for taking time to talk about Carl's explosive paper. (laughter) If I hear your name uttered in vain under someone's breath this week, I will give you a heads-up so you can be looking behind you. (laughs) But, no—this is something that's really valuable. People need to realize that you can get benefit from biblical languages without having to spend thousands of dollars going to class, doing the degree thing. You just have to know where to find the strategies. Who can I go to, where can I go, what are some things I can get to teach me how to think well about the biblical text. And then that's your next step,

and then you move on from there. So it's not rocket science. We don't do rocket science here at the Biblical Studies Conference. But you'd think a lot of people just can't, for some reason, think beyond the old model and it's frustrating.

I want to spend a little more time with Thomas, so if you have a few minutes to stick around... you do something else that's interesting to the audience.

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MH: Okay, Thomas... Tell the listeners a little bit more about what you do academically—sort of a different level, a different area of New Testament studies. I should tell people that if you want to break now and go listen to a little bit of it (or after we're done here with Thomas), we did an episode on New Testament manuscripts and some of the myths behind. Well, Thomas has his head in that world very deeply. So why don't you just tell the listeners what else you're into.

TH: Well, this is very, very exciting. Most people don't want to know what you write your books on, but here we go! Just imagine back at the beginning of the 16th century. Right now we're celebrating the Reformation and one of the important figures for that is a man named Erasmus. We really appreciate Erasmus. He successfully put together the first Greek New Testament that was printed and published. What most people don't know is that two years before Erasmus' Greek New Testament was published, there was another Greek New Testament that was printed. It was printed over in Spain in a place called "Alcala de Henares" (just right outside of Madrid in this beautiful little town) by Cisneros, a Catholic cardinal and a team of Spanish philologists. It is the most beautiful Greek Testament. It really puts Erasmus' Greek New Testament to shame as far as its presentation and its esthetics. What's interesting, Mike, is everybody talks about this first printed Greek New Testament, but it's always in an introduction to talking about Erasmus and his Greek New Testament. So it's unfortunate that this really beautiful—and in my opinion, more important—Greek New Testament just sort of gets lost in the fog. It's sort of only viewed in the shadow of Erasmus, when in actuality I think it's Erasmus' that ought to be viewed in the shadow of the *Complutensian Polyglot Bible* and the *Complutensian Greek New Testament*.

The reason why we wanted to study this is that everybody basically writes the same thing in all of the books and all of the introductions talking about the Greek New Testament and its history. The one thing that everybody always points out about the first printed Greek New Testament that was printed in Spain is that supposedly (and you can't see me making quotation marks right now around "supposedly," but I am), the manuscripts that they used for that Greek New Testament came from the Vatican. Nobody had ever really done a comprehensive assessment of whether or not manuscripts actually did come from the Vatican. So in order to do that, you have to take the Vatican

manuscripts and look at what their Greek manuscripts say. And there are differences in Greek manuscripts. Then we have to compare that to the text that the *Complutensian* editors put together. And Mike, I will tell you: It looks incredible how much divergence there is between the *Complutensian* text and those manuscripts that are at the Vatican. There's a lot.

MH: So tell the listeners... Give them a quick definition of what the *Complutensian Polyglot* is. The term "polyglot" is going to throw some people. Then I think listeners can pick up on the fact that when you did the work on the Polyglot you actually had to gain access to the secret archives—yeah, like Tom Hanks! Maybe we can throw in some scary music here, talking about the Vatican Archives and library! Maybe we can get into a little conspiracy theory here. How did you go about your work on this? So what is the Polyglot and what is its importance now that you've been able to get access to some of this material?

TH: Great questions. So a polyglot is basically a book with the same text in multiple languages. So the *Polyglot Bible* is an entire complete Bible. It has six volumes, but the sixth volume is more just resources that would be helpful for somebody that was using first five volumes (like a dictionary and a grammar and stuff like that). Volumes One through Four have the Old Testament and Volume Five has the New Testament. Volume Five is the one that I studied. All together you have Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, Greek, etc., all on the same page. Volume Five has a Greek column and a Latin one, so it's not interlinear—it's not Greek over Latin or Latin over Greek. They have their own separate columns. It really is remarkable. I had the opportunity to see a number of different copies of it.

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I don't think you know this, Mike, but I actually found the fifth volume (the Greek and Latin New Testament) at the Library of Congress. It had been misplaced. It was crazy! (laughs) They had actually sent it out to be rebound over 80 years ago, and when they sent it out, the people that rebound it and embossed it on the spine—they put the wrong information on the spine. So when I went to the Library of Congress I was talking to the guys there and I said, "You have to have Volume Five! There's no way the Library of Congress doesn't have Volume Five." And we ended up locating it. You can imagine the librarians at the Library of Congress running around... I joke with them now that I'm like Indiana Jones, but they say it really wasn't that big of a find!

I ended up going to the Vatican, and that was a remarkable experience. It's really incredible... the protocol that you have to go through to get in. There are not very many people per year that get access to go into the Rare Manuscripts Room. So I didn't just get into the library, I got into the Rare Manuscripts Room. They were extremely gracious—extremely nice to me and hospitable. Most of the looking at the manuscripts, though, I was able to do through what's called the INTF, which is the Institute for New Testament Textual Research that's in Munster, Germany. But I did do research at the Vatican and looked at their manuscripts while I was there (the ones I couldn't access via the database from Munster). But you said

you wanted a conspiracy story, so I'll tell you this one real fast. The curator, while I was at the Vatican Library, the curator in the Rare Manuscripts Room... While I was sitting at my computer looking at manuscripts he would email me occasionally. One of the questions he had for me—and this is pretty remarkable considering that this person is responsible for one of the most important New Testament manuscripts (Codex Vaticanus)... He emailed me and asked me while I'm in the room, "Why are you wasting your life looking at this?" Now, it's pretty remarkable, but it kind of sets it in perspective that not everybody looks at the Bible the way that we do. Because the Word of God is inspired—and not just the words that are in the Bible, but as Dave Black (who I studied under at Northeastern) would say, "God didn't just inspire the words, he inspired the tense, the voice, the mood, the person, the number, the gender, the case, the word order, the phrase order, the clause order, the discourse structure..." And I'm glad I actually get to say that because I think more people need to have a more robust understanding of biblical inspiration. It's not just words. He chose tenses, voice, moods, persons, number, gender, case, word order, clause order, phrase order, discourse structure—all of that was inspired by God. But not everybody looks at the Bible the same way. I will say this, just to reiterate—the Vatican was extremely hospitable and it truly was one of the best experiences of my life, looking at manuscripts there. They would not let me see *Codex Vaticanus*, though. (laughter)

MH: You can get that in facsimile, can't you? So you didn't get to touch the original? Well, I don't know—you might leave a smudge on it or something. Maybe leftover piece of a chocolate bar... Oops, there it goes on the page! (laughs)

TH: When I went to Peru... There's copies of this first Greek New Testament (and really the whole Polyglot Bible). There's not that many, but there are copies literally all over the world. When I was in Peru, for example, my wife found a news article... My wife's Honduran, so we travel down to Central and South America regularly to teach and train believers all throughout Latin America. And we also translated David Allen Black's *Learn to Read New Testament Greek* into Spanish. You ought to check that out because, talk about a revolution! We really caused a revolution with how we published that book. Maybe that'll be another podcast sometime. But when we were down there in Peru, my wife found out, "They have a copy of the *Complutensian Polyglot* here, Thomas, you wanna go see it?" And I said, "Absolutely, let's go!" When we went and asked about it, nobody knew where the *Complutensian Polyglot Bible* was. It had actually been plundered during the war with Chile and Peru, and so they stole it when Chile had invaded Peru they stole a bunch of books (rare manuscripts) out of the Peruvian library and it had just been returned in 2008 to the Peruvian government. So when we were asking about it, nobody knew where it was. They told me, "All of those books that were brought back from Chile are still in a warehouse." I'll just tell you this: If you've ever been to Central or South America, it is not a good thing that something as valuable as this would be found in a warehouse. So

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anyway, I told them how important it was and they responded and they went and tracked this thing down. It took them two days to find it and dig it out. They brought it to me. I'll never forget when they brought it to me, I got to view it in the National Library. Who would have guessed that this would just be tucked away in a library, in a *bodega*, in a warehouse? It's amazing the things that we've uncovered just from looking for this thing and studying it over the past three years.

MH: It reminds me of the scene in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade when they were talking about Marcus, how he got lost in his own museum! (laughs) Stuff like that really does happen. Things get misplaced and then, you know—who's gonna find it? The last person that handled it could slip it in their drawer somewhere and it's gone! That kind of stuff really happens.

Well, thanks for letting us get a little glimpse of that. Yes, folks, there really are people out there who do textual criticism. There are a few of those. They tend to all be here this week, or at least most of them at some point in the week. Just so that you know, there is still a lot of work to do there. People find things all the time—either intentionally or unintentionally. In this case, moving back before Erasmus and that whole history of that text family, what we now call "Byzantine Majority"... Here you go, you have somebody who all of a sudden just decided, was moved and prompted to spend some time looking at the thing that came before, and that became a dissertation, and that will have its contribution, that will leak into text-critical discussion, and evaluation of variance will probably get a new look because of Thomas' work. Those people are out there (pun-intended, I guess). (laughs) Thanks a lot!

MH: We're back. We have another guest with us. I'm going to introduce Randall Price, who will be familiar to a lot of you. Randall has a pretty large presence online. He has a ministry devoted to archaeology and Biblical Studies, but beyond that I'll let him introduce himself. Give out your website, and we'll go from there.

RP: Thanks, Michael. The website is worldofthebible.com. World of the Bible is a ministry that deals with the past, the present, and the prophetic world of the Bible. The past deals with archaeology of the Bible to help us understand the ancient texts. Many times, if you don't have the proper context, it's hard to understand the text itself. Today, because of the way many churches approach the handling of the Scriptures, it's very topical—it's grab-bag pick and choose, and you don't have the opportunity to go to the context to understand what's there. And of course, that's very important to understanding the message itself. But we're removed by thousands of years, as well as thousands of miles, from that original context. So one of the things that our ministry does through

archaeology and other things is to bring the world of the Bible to the word of the Church.

That second area, which dealt with the present... The Middle East today is a conflicted stage. I've written books, done videos, things related to the Middle East conflict. I've had the opportunity, not only to live in Israel (I went to school there), but I've gotten to know a lot of the people actually on both sides of the conflict through the years—Prime Ministers of the people. From that I've been able to address some of the issues, because I'm aware of them.

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The third area was the prophetic, because out of all of this grows the promise of Jesus Christ, that he's going to return and in his coming there are promises that he said he would fulfill, and he will. The Jewish people largely do not believe Jesus is the Messiah because they say there are things the Messiah was supposed to do that Jesus did not do, and that's true. He didn't regather Israel to the land. He didn't rebuild the temple. He didn't bring peace on earth—simple things like this. No, he hasn't yet. But he's going to. Because his first coming was to deal with suffering and provide redemption, and he promised, "I will come again." So it's very important to understand the fulfillment of prophecy in the original stage where those prophecies were given—that is the Middle East.

MH: Do you ever run into a situation where you almost have to convince people that they should care about the original context? To us, that's just axiomatic, but I've had discussions and I've gone to places to speak and you can just tell... Some people will actually verbalize it, "Why should I care about what happened in some ancient culture? Even if it's contemporary, who cares?"

RP: We're even past a post-modern way of thinking, but that is that *you* are the standard of things. "It really doesn't matter what the Bible says. It's what I *think* the Bible says or what I *feel* the Bible says. Why should I worry about the ancient context where it was given? I live in the 21st century, which matters." My argument is: If we don't get it right in the original context to the original people to whom the message was given, we're not going to be able to export it to the 21st century in an accurate way and apply it to ourselves. I'll give you an example: Psalm 46:10. I've heard many people that just read this passage. It says, "Be still and know that I am God." Well, what does that mean to most people? Well, it means "be still." Sit under a tree, contemplate...

MH: Oprah talked about that! (laughing)

RP: But now the original context, if you read the verses before and after, deal with the nations that were warring against God. What it literally says is, "Cease striving against me. Acknowledge my sovereignty." That's a very good message, too, but it's the message that was intended for that passage. I mean, we can all be still and know that God... and there's a place for that, but that's not what the text says. And it should matter to us that God wrote it and he wanted to

communicate a certain message. So we need to understand that message and live that out. So maybe we'll get "truths" that are not in the text. That should matter because they're not sourced in what God gave.

MH: Right, it's not why God prompted that particular thing to be written. Now, you do a lot of work with Dead Sea Scrolls and archeology and the Qumran context. Can you give us an update there, what you're up to?

1:00:00

RP: For ten years I was the Director of Excavations at Qumran, which is the site where the Dead Sea Scrolls were produced and hidden away. For those who don't know what the Dead Sea Scrolls are, those are the oldest copies of the Bible that we have, that have been preserved and go back 200 years before the time of Jesus, largely. There was a Jewish community that produced these. And while the New Testament gives us accounts of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they left no writings of their own. And we really have no window into the time of Jesus to gauge the accuracy of the history of that site apart from the New Testament. There are some other types of manuscripts out there, but when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, we not only had the oldest copies of the Bible, but they left us a vast *litterateur* commenting on the people, the political situations, many other things. And all of a sudden, you could see that when Jesus came into the world (the Bible says in Galatians 4) was at the right time. We say, "Why didn't he come today? We have satellites. He could communicate his message all over the world." No, it was the right time. There was a road system the Romans had, there was a united language of Greek that could be communicated. But his people were spiritually bankrupt. He came at the time of the greatest need, and the prophets had predicted that time. Those who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls were aware of that. They were looking for the coming of the Messiah, and I believe there was a large number of them that came to the Lord probably after Pentecost or at Pentecost. We know that in Jerusalem, it says in Acts 6 that many of them were becoming obedient to the faith, which indicates to me that if priests there could, then the priests who lived at Qumran might as well because they had more of an affinity and a closer relationship to the prophets, which gave the message of the Messiah.

Now, one of the things I'm going to be doing a few weeks from now, I'm taking a team and we're going back to the Qumran area to the Dead Sea Scroll caves. Originally these scrolls that were written were put in jars and hidden away in caves to preserve them for their own library use, but then when they were attacked by the Romans in the year AD 68, they fled from the site. A lot of them went to Masada and then they all perished there in the year 73. So these things just stayed in the caves and nobody knew they were even there until somewhere in the 1940's, some Bedouins (local shepherds in the area) stumbled upon some. We know about some; we know of some 12 caves.

MH: So you're going to participate... I read something recently about kind of systematically going through the area, checking more caves or re-checking.

RP: That's being done now. It was originally done back in 1994, something called "Operation Scroll." When the area, particularly Jericho and others, were being turned over to the Palestinian Authority, the archaeologists were afraid that Qumran (because they said there was going to be a "religious site" on the map of the Palestinians and everybody believed it was Qumran), so the archaeologists decided to go through these caves and do a survey to see what was there because if they were going to be turned over they would lose this opportunity. One of the caves that was surveyed is the one I'm going to be working in. But there's a new impetus because they discovered with just the whole political situation—Palestinians, Bedouins, others, looting caves. So this stuff goes to ISIS and crosses the border through military operations and other things. So they're in the caves digging illegally, taking the stuff out, selling it to the highest bidder for private collections. This information will be lost forever. And again, context is important. You find an artifact, but it's not where it came from. You don't know where it came from. The artifact itself tells you something, but it tells you much more if it's there in the original place where it last existed.

MH: Are you operating under the auspices of a larger group? I know you have to get permission from the Antiquities Department...

RP: You have to have a permit. Since I surveyed this cave about 6 years ago, we've taken the time... I had to get the publication of my previous excavations further along so I would be allowed to do another one. With the permission now to do this, we're kind of coming in before this initiative to search widespread the caves. We're going to do this one cave. We're working with the Israelis and working with others, and I have a team from the States that comes over. But it's ambitious work. You've got a cave way up high in the cliffs. You've got to climb to it. It's pretty rugged and there's not a lot of room in there. We've gotta get rocks out because the ceiling is collapsing in many cases over the years. But the potential of finding more scrolls... When you imagine from a monetary sense, just one piece of a scroll the size of a thumbnail is a million dollars. That's how precious these things are. But the knowledge that they bring is far more precious. We know there's more out there, but they just haven't been discovered. We appreciate people's prayers on this, because we only have two weeks to do the work and it has to be done very effectively.

MH: So you're pretty prolific. Last question: Do you have a recent book that you would tell the audience about? Something you'd recommend?

RP: Yeah. One of the areas that I write quite a bit in is concerning the temple in Jerusalem. It's because of the conflict there, and people need to have accurate information. So I did a book called *Rose Guide to the Temple*. It's a full-color book and you can find it in most any bookstore. The publisher's name is "Rose," that's why it's *Rose Guide to the Temple*. But I wrote the book. It's a fully illustrated, nice book. We also produced a computer program called "The Virtual

Tour of the Temple." If anybody listening has ever gone to Israel, when they go to Jerusalem they want to visit the Temple Mount. But it's under the control of the Muslim authorities. They will not allow you to talk about the temple, which they say never existed. You can't bring a picture; you can't open your mouth about it. So you lose this whole context where Jesus spent the last week of his life, for sure, teaching and visiting three times a year when he was growing up, and where so much of history took place. So we went up there with, shall we say, hidden cameras and hidden microphones. It took us three years because it took time to get this done. We used a 360-degree camera, too, so now this is produced in such a way that when you get this program you put it on your computer and you're there. You can turn any way you want to, to see behind you and before... you can jump walls, go over things, go all over the Temple Mount. There are data points that are pulled up and chat charts and maps, but also about 100 videos in which I'm teaching on the Temple Mount. The very thing you can't do today, I did. You get a chance to do that. So that's available from our World of the Bible Ministries at worldofthebible.com

MH: Well, hey—thanks for spending a few minutes with us. The Lord bless your ministry and your success and your safety over there when you get going. So thank you.

RP: You're most welcome.

TS: All right, Mike. Those were two great interviews—three, actually! It's pretty neat, going to the secret vaults of the Vatican and then digging for more Dead Sea Scrolls. I mean, that's pretty awesome right there!

MH: Yep, well that's the kind of thing you'll run into here. It's one of the reasons to come.

TS: It's crazy... I feel like I'm an assistant to Indiana Jones or something! I don't know what, but it's crazy. It's amazing to see just the different levels of interest and... It's literally the spectrum... For me in my first time here, it's amazing seeing just the different level of expertise and interest. There are so many niches in biblical studies that it just goes on and on and on.

MH: Yeah, it's important for our listeners (and really everybody) to realize that this is an event. A lot of people are familiar with conferences and they're sort of what I affectionately call "Christian Middle Earth" conferences: prophecy conferences and conspiracy conferences. And you know, sort of lay-level Bible conferences. Those are the kinds of things that most people are going to be familiar with. And an event like this is totally off the radar, but this is the time of year when you'll get in the evangelical world two or three thousand people at this

event, and then in the wider Biblical Studies world (world of religion), later in this week the Society of Biblical Literature conference will be starting... Archaeology conferences. You'll get ten, twelve thousand scholars of all faith commitments (or no faith commitments), but anybody who's anybody at the scholarly level of Biblical Studies in theology and archaeology, they are here this week. So people need to get exposed to this.

TS: It's almost overdose. (laughter)

MH: That's a word you could really use! Over a thousand papers during the week that you could go to. So "overdose" is not a bad way to categorize it.

TS: All right, well I'm looking forward to our interviews that we have coming up, and stay tuned. We have a lot more to come. This is only Part 1, so be looking forward to Part 2. I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.