

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 133

Live from San Antonio

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**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

**Guest: Dr. David Burnett (DB)**

### Episode Summary

Our first live episode where Dr. Heiser and special guest David Burnett answer questions from a live audience. Thank you to everyone who came and joined us in San Antonio, Texas.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 133, "Live from San Antonio!" I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! We're in San Antonio in my home state. Look at everybody... we've got people here in front of us!

**MH:** Yes, we do! We have live people.

**TS:** This is awesome.

**MH:** It's good to have live people.

**TS:** It is! And we've been doing shows all week, but this is the first show that we actually get to do—that I actually get to talk, because normally when you're interviewing somebody I just sit there with my mouth shut because I don't have anything intelligent to say.

**MH:** Those are great shows, too. Those are the best, right, right.. (audience laughing)

**TS:** I'm sure everybody just fast-forwards through my parts to get to you. I see how that is. Well, we went to see the movie *The Arrival* last night. I don't know if anybody has seen that movie...

**MH:** Anybody seen that? All right, we won't give away any spoilers.

**TS:** Yeah, we won't spoil it, but did you like it?

**MH:** I did. It's pretty heady. Have any of you seen the old Jodie Foster movie, *Contact*? It's like that. I don't think it's as good, but it's good. That's kind of what you're looking at. It's not *Independence Day*. (laughing) Burnett, you love *Independence Day*? (laughter)

**TS:** Yeah, we also have David Burnett here, so any questions targeted towards David... Ask him. We're here.

**MH:** I'll defer some to David, how's that. Hand them off.

**TS:** Sounds good. Do we just want to get straight to the questions? All right, do you want me to just go around the table? Bree, are you all right if we start with you, or do you want me to go the other way? Or Brian? Chris? You want to start? You have a question? Which way do you want me to go? Who wants to be on the spot first? We're going to let Brian... Brian got here super early to help us get the loft here at Rosella's Coffee Shop in downtown San Antonio (I'll give them a shout-out). Brian got here early, so we're going to let Brian start it.

**Brian:**

**Mike, my question is, I guess more about just present-day application to this information—I guess in more of a worship context and how biblical authors kind of viewed worship and how we view it. Those are probably two different things. I know the example of psalters were like Old Testament priestly leaders of Jericho, but they were warring, too. So how do we put this into a present-day context, this information about the gods? Could we be worshiping other gods and not even realizing it sometimes? I know idols exist in occult settings and stuff, but could idols be on TV? Could idols just be in stuff that these gods inhabit, and we need to kind of view that as serious? How do we apply what you're teaching here to our everyday lives?**

**MH:** Dave, did you hear that? Because I'd be interested... You pastored for a while, too. I'd be interested to hear your take on this, too.

Well, I think at some level you all know I'm not going to abstract the gods so that they aren't real, into other things, but there is something to be said for what you swap in to worship in the sense of adoration. What receives your attention? What do you trust in? I think that's a big deal. We actually had a similar question on a Q&A in an earlier episode where I talked about part of a worship status between an Israelite and God. It really relates to, "What do I put my confidence in as far as who's going to sustain me?" They don't take a lot of things for granted in terms of what they have to eat, what they have to drink, their personal safety, all this sort of stuff. So trust actually was a significant part of how a person thought about Yahweh. Again, if you're not trusting in him and you're trusting in something else—either yourself or you're convinced for some reason to trust another deity—

5:00

there's an example of idolatry, even without you having to sort of go participate in some ritual at some cult location. So I do think that's an element that we can see sort of a transferability in terms of where our confidence is for living. It's kind of interesting also in that when we talked to N.T. Wright today, and in his latest book one of the things I wanted to kind of get some response out of him for was that he talks about sin being really at its heart idolatry. It's not so much "I broke a rule," it's "my loyalty is toward another." That can manifest in a variety of ways. So we talked a little bit about that because I thought it was interesting that he would sort of funnel biblical talk about sin in that direction. I think that's a touch-point, too, that we can talk about: How does God really look at us?

If you remember, we've had a couple episodes on the podcast, including some Q&A's, where we talked about David. David was a mess. He commits all sorts of sins and some really horrible ones. But the thing he never does is there's no question about his loyalties. So even though he's a screw-up in so many ways, he's never crossing the line where, "Maybe Yahweh isn't the God..." That's not even on the radar. So that's a good example where God looks at violations of, let's say, morality or something like that. Yes, they're wrong. Yes, they're violations (the law and what-not), but the big focus is "Who is your God?" And when it really comes down to it, "Where is your believing loyalty?" And that directly relates to idolatry. I think that's another example of the kind of thing, if we were preaching, instead of talking about sin in terms of breaking a rule, when push comes to shove, who are you trusting? Where is your believing loyalty? Because forgiveness is a factor there, too. If you abandon your confidence in the Lord's forgiveness, that actually itself is sort of a form of idolatry and you're putting yourself in the place of God as far as an assessment of your relationship with God. You sort of become the arbiter of that relationship instead of trusting him. So I would tend to apply it in those sorts of ways. I'd like to hear, Dave, what you think.

**DB:** Yeah, I'm not sure if I would go about it with the same route. When we ask questions of worship and idolatry, we've got to be sure that—if we're asking the questions of the biblical text—that we're using the categories that they're using. I'm sure you've all heard this before. I grew up hearing this. When you hear sermons on idolatry, normally what pastors/preachers will do with that is they'll say things like, "the money is your idol" or "sex can be your idol" or whatever. You've heard that, right? I have. I've heard it all my life. But in the biblical tradition, that's not idolatry. None of that stuff is idolatry. None of that stuff has anything to do with idolatry. So when we say, "Well, can you make money your idol?" No, you can't. Can you make sex an idol? No, you can't. You can't make your wife your idol. You can't make your children your idol. Just stop that language right now. (laughs) Idolatry, just like the term "worship"—and this is really important so I'm glad you paired those in your question—because biblically this is a kind of a complicated issue, but I'm going to try to simplify it. Idolatry always had to do with (and Mike, if you want to nuance this you can) *literal, cultic worship of deities*. What I mean by cultic worship of deities—this has to do with

10:00

what "worship" means. There's a debate in early Christian scholarship on whether the earliest Christians, the Jewish Jesus followers, actually worshiped Jesus. Now for many Christians, they'd be like, "What? How could you say that?" But the question, the way it's framed, is with these modern categories of what worship is, right? So when we think of what worship is, it's like singing to God or praising Jesus, or whatever. But the terms for worship in Greek, in particular, and also into Hebrew... The Greek term I'm thinking of is *threskeia*, which means "cult," it means "sacrifice." So you would bring offerings or sacrifices to deities. And that's what would frequently be translated "worship." Now why I said this is complicated is, when you're reading your English translations of your Bibles, most English translations (and I don't really know any other English translations that don't do this—maybe I'm ignorant of one) will translate that word *threskeia* (for cult worship that you offered to deities) the same as they'll translate the word *proskyneō*, which means to just bow down or fall prostrate. This is a big, big problem. For us reading modern English Bibles, what that causes us to do is, when we see worship of idols that have real gods behind them, we tend to equate that with other passages that are using *proskyneō*, which just means to bow down. The reason these are not the same things is because you can *proskyneō* a master of a household, like if you're a slave you can bow down prostrate before your master. Or it's something you do before a king. But it does not mean you're offering them cultic worship. So you see those terms—it's a really important distinction when we talk about worship and idolatry.

**MH:** That's good, because what I was tracking on is essentially, "What do you think you're getting out of it?" And you're hitting the good distinction with the practices.

**DB:** I have to hit that up, because I think it's one of the biggest exegetical failures of preachers. They don't know how to make those distinctions, and they can confuse people. They're like, "Am I worshiping idols if I like money a lot?" or something. But it's like, "No, you shouldn't like money a lot, but that's not what we would call idolatry."

**MH:** Right. Since that part of it is sort of taken off the table, then in terms of our modern application we do have to ask ourselves, "What do we think we're getting out of this other stuff, even though we can't strictly practice idolatry in the mode that they were doing it."

**DB:** Right. It's like we have to... This is kind of an interesting... Me and Mike have talked about this before. It's this interesting problem where you have all these texts in the Old Testament and New Testament (particularly in Paul) talking about idolatry that pastors want to make some quick application with, but sometimes you just can't and that's okay. Most of us grew up in the monotheistic West, where we have the reverse problem now. The problem in the monotheistic West is not the gods per se—they don't believe in those anymore. It's like, "Do you believe in God?" That's all people say, right? It's like, "Do you believe in God?"

well, "No, I don't believe in God." It's like, no they have *gods*. So we have kind of a reverse problem in the West. I think it's almost impossible in the West to have idolatry in the biblical sense. Again, I know that it's difficult when we use these terms, but I just want to bring clarity to that because I think that's such a confused topic. Hopefully that's helpful.

(Unintelligible question from audience)

**MH:** I'm actually kind of interested in why you're asking that, but you can jump into that later so we get that...

**Questioner:**

**Who were the psalters... the Korahites, the people who wrote the Psalms. What was the purpose of even having Psalms back in the Old Testament—singing—and how did that relate to giving gratitude or thanks to the gods or Yahweh?**

**MH:** I think there are several purposes. You see this in other Ancient Near Eastern cultures. You have the same kind of thing, where you get either ritual language (what we would think of as something liturgical). You get like a ritual language, some part of a ritual itself, set to music or written in such a way that it's more easy to remember it. It's just like poetry. It's a memory device. So I think that was one purpose for it. Maybe even for the priests who had to perform these rituals. It's not like everything was public to the masses all the time. There were some things that were. But you can communicate liturgy or ritual through them. You can communicate naturally if the content component is about the deity. That's like communicating points of theology, as well. So I think there's a memory element. I don't think it was about making the people listening feel a certain way. In other words, it wasn't directed to them, it was directed to the deity. If you look at the content, they're still expressions of the human condition in some respects. It really depends on context. You're going to have some things that are very cult-oriented—a very specific reason why we're saying what we're saying—and then you're going to have other things that are sort of freestyle adoration—not directed toward making us feel a certain way, but praising God, praising the deity, in other contexts. So I tend to think that what we do now... There are some significant disconnects in not only how we do worship, but how we even use some of those elements.

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**DB:** I actually think there's two parts to that question. When we talk about the Psalter and then why there's Levites in front of the temple always singing at the doorway—I think those are two different questions. The priests always singing in front of the temple is really interesting. I think there's a lot we could say about that, but one thing that I think is really interested (I don't know if we've talked about this before, Mike)...

**MH:** I think there's a sacred space element, too, because normally you don't see people singing all the time. But when you encounter this place, it's like incense. It makes this place different. Singing—it marks out sacred space.

**DB:** But where else do you hear about choirs singing all the time in the Old Testament? In heaven! But particularly in the heavenly temple. So this is really important, actually. Job 38 is an interesting passage here that you can make a correlation to. Job 38 is where God answers back Job—really intense passage, you know. Really intense devotional right there! You are NOTHING, you know (laughs)... I love it! They recount the narrative of creation and Job tells it in a way of temple-building, of temple-construction. When God is like, "Where were you when I laid the foundations" or, "sank the plumb-lines." He's talking about creation, but creation is temple-building. And what were the angels doing when they created, when they built? They were singing and rejoicing! So this is really interesting. It took me a while to catch onto this. I think it was Margaret Barker or somebody (I can't remember who I read that tipped me off on the connection) but the idea that there's singing going on and rejoicing as God is bringing order to the chaos—which is good news because there is inhabitable space, there's a place with darkness and chaos. And when God begins constructing his temple and bringing order to that which has no order, it's something worthy to be praised and to sing about. And so when the temple is constructed, there's singing and rejoicing of the angels in Heaven and the priests are like mirrors of that reality—and not just mirrors of that reality, but literal participants in it. Because an ancient Israelite wouldn't know the difference between the temple and the temple of Heaven, per say. There's overlap there. We call it the "gateway of Heaven and earth" kind of.

**MH:** Remember when we were doing the series on Leviticus, when we talked about concepts of sacred space? One of the reasons they had calendar (and calendar was a big deal) and the Festivals and the timing of this or that, was this notion of being in sync.

**DB:** It's also astral.

**MH:** So all of these things mark out sacred space. God's house is where you would expect order. You don't expect disorder there.

**DB:** And what do you find in that Job 38 text? It's interesting. Who are the ones singing? It says it's the sons of God, but it also calls them the stars. The celestial order—everything is kept in order, right? So when you see a falling star, it's normally a rebel angel or something in the Old Testament.

(Unintelligible from audience)

**DB:** Yeah! Actually, that's exactly right. I think that's one of the best ways you could put it: You're in tune with the heavenly order. That's a really good way to

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put it. An interesting note on that... This is one of the main reasons (Mike and I were just talking about this)... this is one of the main reasons why the Qumran sectarians... Not necessarily all the literature from Qumran, but the sectarian literature at Qumran—I'm thinking particularly of a letter called 4QMMT. This was a letter written to Jerusalem from the sectarians who were separating. In this letter you find a number of interesting things, but one of the main reasons they separated from the Jerusalem cult is that they were on a lunar calendar and they were on the solar calendar. They believed that... Now for us modern people we think, why would you fight and go out to the wilderness over this?

**MH:** Yeah, who gives a rip?

**DB:** What a stupid thing to separate over! But it's not stupid if you actually believe that those Festivals that you're participating in are literally participating with the angels of Heaven, and that your participation in the cultic festivals and in those times and seasons are literally assisting in those who would keep the orders of the whole cosmos. And so, if you're doing the wrong thing, guess what? The cosmos is out of whack! You're supposed to participate with them. So it was a huge deal in early Judaism. This was not a small thing! So the being in tune with the heavenly order is a really big deal in early Judaism.

**Questioner:**

**I just wanted to tag onto Brian's question, then, in light of everything you've said. At the quantum level, everything is vibration. And so we talk about bringing order out of chaos and the angels are singing and the angels are the stars. So without spending a lot of time elaborating, do you think it matters, then, what tune we play or what harmony we put to it or what rhythm we use with it? And I'm just thinking about how things have changed from the expressions of the Psalms that would come out of people like Bach and Mozart versus the expression of the same Psalms that's coming through a lot of more popular Christian music that draws its themes from secular music. Do you think that matters?**

**MH:** Yeah, I'm a music idiot! Literally, I don't even know what the notes are. I don't know how I got out of grade school without knowing this. I understand why you're asking, but music in ancient Israel would have been dramatically different from Bach and Mozart, as well. So I don't know that we can make a value judgment on the music. I certainly can't because I don't know anything about it. But I think we can make a value judgment on why we're doing what we're doing. I realize this is subjective, too, but one of the points of application you get out of what David was saying (sacred space should be different, you're invited to sacred space, what goes on here should reflect the idea of orderliness and glorifying God that went with sacred space cast in heaven)... So those are the kinds of things we can use, even though we're not so tuned into this idea of being in sync with the angels and all that sort of thing. But we can still take what they

were thinking when they were doing that and ask ourselves, "Are we (pun intended) in tune with that?" For me personally, because I can't really evaluate what's actually done in performance, but I think I can evaluate: "Does this draw not only the person doing it, but the congregation. Does it feel like we're on holy ground now? Does it feel like we've entered sacred space? Is this different from what our regular lives are?" Trying to get the distinctions, trying to think in these terms, that this should be something special. The problem that we run into is that we are sacred space. So it's a little bit different. But I think even when we gather as an assembly, it's still useful to be reminded of these ideas. This still contains points of biblical theology that are useful to help us take our minds away from the mundane things of life and get us to focus on the heavenly life that awaits us. So I think it's very useful.

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**DB:** Can I add one more thing? Just one quick thing about that question. I was asked that question a lot as a pastor. There are two different answers I would give to it. One, there is, I think... I hesitate to use this word, but there is a kind of *objective* sense of harmony to the created order that humans are intended to tap into. I think that's where a lot of beauty comes from, like a lot of art and music are. I mean, I have philosopher buddies who have done PhD's on this (I haven't) about beauty as an objective apologetic. So the most beautiful music should be in the Church, and I actually agree with that. I think the most excellent music should be in the Church. But the second answer to that (that I think is really important for people who ask the question) is to know that we have to remember that when Revelation talks about a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation that are all worshipping the Lamb, they're all doing it in their own languages. God doesn't make them... It's really interesting that God doesn't make it all one language. Isn't that interesting? Some Jewish traditions at the time would say things like (and you find this in pseudepigraphal literature) that the heavenly language is Hebrew, and that's what all the animals and the humans spoke before the Fall. This is actually a pretty dominant Jewish view at the period of Jesus. Weird folks, since Hebrew is, like, a post-Akkadian dialect, but whatever! But it shows the ethnocentricity of it. "You have to speak *our* language! You have to be just like us!" But the New Testament shows a completely different picture, that the worship is actually different languages and different cultures, and sometimes that's going to be different melodies, different tunes, and that's beautiful to God. So I think the multi-faceted-ness of worship is actually essential in the world.

**MH:** I'm jotting myself a note here because it's too bad Steven Hubscher's not here. He's posted several things on celestial worship. He is a musician. So I'm just giving myself a note to ask him to maybe give us a post on that, what he thinks about that.

**Jonathan:** My name is Jonathan, and it's a pleasure to be here, first of all.



**A few days ago I was able to go hear N.T. Wright speak at the McFarlin Memorial Auditorium at SMU and it was the first lecture out of three, I think, about "The Jesus I Never Knew." Early on in the lecture, he brought up a point about how we look at the afterlife right now versus how the first century disciples would have looked at it. The theme of it was that to them, heaven and earth belong together. They were experiencing something that was the climax of world history (the resurrection of Christ). But then he mentioned about how the way we look at the afterlife now is more borrowed from Gnosticism—it's a private spirituality. When you die you go to heaven—it's escapist. And that if the first century disciples had really thought that way they wouldn't have been persecuted because they were proclaiming, "No, no, no, it's a new world order right here, right now. You're not going to worship Caesar anymore. Jesus is the king now." And that's why they were persecuted. It wasn't like, "Do what you want, and then when you die you get to see what the Kingdom looks like." I think this dovetails into everything we're saying because I believe that when you look at the Old Testament (and N.T. Wright brought this up) that the tabernacle is a model of creation, that all these things mirror what's going on above, and they're supposed to be constant reminders that one day when things are perfectly set up, heaven and earth will be one thing [MH: reunited]. They'll be married. They'll be reunited. My disturbing thought on that, being a non-specialist, is that we inherited these Gnostic views, and that's what I've always heard. Am I wrong to think that way?**

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**MH:** Well, in his book he refers to it as "Platonic Eschatology." Yeah, I kind of disagree with him, too, but he doesn't deny... When he says stuff like that, some have accused him of denying an intermediate state. In other words, when you die you're with the Lord. So you do go somewhere. But he'll say that Paul affirms an intermediate state—some kind of thing like that. Since he does that, since he doesn't deny that, he would be, to use his own words back at him: "Well, you're a little Platonic, too, then!" But I think what his polemic is... He doesn't want to... Let me say it this way: I think he thinks there's an overemphasis on that and not enough emphasis on seeing the purpose of the atonement, your destiny as a believer... projecting it, sort of, "Okay, when I die I'm outta here." For a lot of believers, that's sort of where it ends. That's the end-game. What he's saying is, "We shouldn't be overemphasizing that, though not denying it. We should be thinking more in terms of restoring Eden" (this audience will understand that). We actually got into this today. I told him this is how we talk about it on the show, this is how I talk about it in the book... He's right there. So I think for him it's an issue of emphases. You want to add anything to that?

**DB:** With all due respect to Dr. Wright... I cut my teeth on his work in my undergrad...

**MH:** This is not the only place where David disagrees.

**DB:** Yeah, this is not the only place where I disagree with him. Me and him had this debate in 2014 when I defended my paper against him. Hopefully we'll have it again Monday. (laughter) A lot of things he says around this topic I completely agree with, but this picky—and you will hear this a lot if you pay attention—the modern critique is, of like everyone who's bought into that paradigm, they'll say, "Well, you either believe in a physical, earthy resurrection or you're a Platonist. That's actually not true in the ancient world. That's an over-simplification. Because there are other ways of thinking about becoming... So this is his objection to other scholars like myself who think that the celestial transformation is literal for Paul. He literally believes you'll become like the celestial bodies. Now for Wright, he thinks this is, "All right, you're just a Platonist" because the celestial bodies in Plato, they're "unbodied." Your soul, or your *psychon*, leaves the body—"the prison," Plato calls it. You flee the prison and then you're truly free in heaven. That's only a Platonist view. The Stoics in the ancient world do not agree. Take Cicero, for example, and this is a major part of my research, actually. Cicero chides Plato for this. Cicero is writing in Latin and he writes this text called *On the Nature of the Gods*. It's probably the most definitive treatment. There are English translations of this you can read online for free because it's open-source (or whatever you call it). So Cicero talks about how the Platonists say that the gods are... He even quotes Plato in Greek, even though he's writing in Latin, saying the Platonists who say that the gods are unbodied, he says, is wrong because anything that has movement and will and operation is a bodied phenomenon. So they have bodies. They're not the same kinds of bodies as humans. They're immortal. They're made of, like, *pneuma* or ether, which are exactly the words Paul uses when he describes the resurrection body. He uses the same language. He says we put off the *epigeia*, the terrestrial, the earthy bodies, and we put on the pneumatic bodies, the celestial bodies. And so the stuff of heaven, of the heavenly bodies, is the stuff that our resurrection bodies are made out of. So you can have a celestial body and have it be bodied and be perfectly okay in the Greek world. So it's not this one or the other. There's a plethora of views. My gosh—Cicero has (laughs)... I mean there are SO many Greek philosophers that disagree on this! So it's not that simple.

**MH:** Wright will tend to get criticized by other people for—and I don't know if there would be anyone that would put it in these terms because it sounds pejorative—but kind of "either/or" fallacies. Some will accuse him of being very reductionistic in an argument. And he does some of that.

**DB:** I know a couple who say that.

**MH:** I've kind of wondered if he's not a little too... If he hasn't bought a little too much of the common view for the Old Testament that the Old Testament doesn't really have the concept of an afterlife. I don't believe that, either, but it's sort of a dominant view. In other words, if you think that, it cuts off continuity with the real, embodied existence with the Lord, that kind of thing. So if you don't believe that, it looks like what Paul is doing is (pardon the pun) out of the ether. He's not

getting it from anywhere. There's no continuity in the Old Testament. I just get that impression.

**DB:** I think you hit the nail on the head. The sources for this stuff... What you'll see in scholarship... A lot of folks just don't know this because they don't have time to read all this junk, you know?

**MH:** (laughs) It's crazy stuff!

**DB:** Yeah, it's just... so technical and takes forever, it's annoying. But some of the sources of this resurrection body stuff are not just Hellenistic. Some scholars will say this is a Hellenistic development—that you don't have any sort of afterlife stuff in the Hellenistic world until after Alexander. That the Scriptures are translated into Greek and they're starting to sort of mesh with Hellenistic concepts of afterlife. That's just not true. It's demonstrably not true. What Mike has said before and I want to say, "Amen times 1,000!" is a lot of these New Testament scholars... Now, I don't fault them. And like I said before on the podcast, there's just so much literature out there. It's impossible to master even your field. But unfortunately, even a lot of the New Testament scholars don't have any sort of—or at least not long enough—formal training in Ancient Near Eastern context. So they're doing Hellenistic world stuff and many of them haven't spent time in the Ancient Near Eastern backgrounds. But if you know (and I had to do this in my thesis that Mike was a reader on)... that astral deification existed for the Pharaohs of Egypt *hundreds* of years before you even have a Hebrew Bible. The Pharaohs are said to not only become a star or ascend above the stars, sometimes to join their brothers or to reign over the stars. Even interesting pyramid texts I've found just before the Middle Kingdom... where the Pharaoh upon his death not only ascends to heaven to join the stars but he rules over them and the skies turn to black, there's an earthquake when it happens. Yeah—where have you heard that before? (laughs) We're talking like 1,000 years before Jesus almost. So I'm just saying this stuff exists in the Ancient Near East. If someone tells you that this stuff is new and Hellenistic, don't buy it for a second because this stuff is all over the Ancient Near Eastern world. My little shtick, sorry.

**MH:** That's one of David's hobby horses. Questions?

**Questioner:**

**I'm just curious. When you talked about the sync with the Festivals. Does that have anything to say today? I know it was for the nation of Israel and they were the purpose, taking the Good News to the rest of the world. That would be my question: Does it have any relevance for today?**

**MH:** Are you wondering in terms of liturgy or are you talking about chronology and calendar?

**Questioner:** I think both, because it seems like there is such a disorder in worship today. What do we do? So some people have gone back to that, you know. And I see why, because it seems to make sense when you read that. It seems to be something that sets it apart, and I'm just wondering if there's... I think some people definitely go too far, but...

40:00

**MH:** Christian liturgy (because of the whole New Testament idea that we are the temple) tended to, instead of focusing directly on a sync idea...because I don't think they entirely lost that, but a lot of liturgy was focused on—and I don't want to sound too Catholic, but—reenacting or reminding people of the significant event of the cross and certain theological points that went with that. But early Christian calendar... You still have this sense that it's really important that we know the right date for Easter... that whole controversy in the Early Church all the way up to the Middle Ages. Like, this is crucial because of this thinking. So there's still some of that, even though the temple, as it were, is now us. But I think we have to keep in mind, is there any relevance to this... If my astronomer friend was here he'd say, "Oh yeah!" (laughs) But there's also this sense of, "Wow, we are the Church." To borrow David's language here: "There is still something being built... the heavenly temple is being built, being constructed, moving ahead in time. It's ongoing. It's a process. Everything is moving to where God wants it to go, because ultimately the abode of God will return to earth." So you kind of have the individual temple merging with the bigger idea in the eschaton. So that's why, even in early Christian history, the Easter one is sort of the most obvious one that gets connected to the celestial stuff. It's why there was still a lot of speculation on the timing of the Second Coming—because it results in heaven returning to earth and the joining of all this stuff. So it never quite loses that. Maybe in practical terms, if we just talked about that in church instead of sort of just making up ceremonies. If we just talked about that in church, people would be thinking about it more in terms of, "Why are we here? Why are we gathered? What in the world are we doing here?"

**DB:** Yeah, to piggy-back off that, I don't mind sounding Catholic. I have no problem sounding Catholic.

**MH:** (laughing) You sounded Easter Orthodox yesterday!

**DB:** Yes, Orthodox. My roommate's Orthodox, so I have a lot of good Orthodox and Catholic buddies. I'm extremely ecumenical. I do not think that the Church started in the 16th century. That's just stupid. (laughter) But look—there are a lot of babies thrown out with the bathwater after the Reformation—a lot of babies. We're pro-life, so we don't like that. The temple liturgy... There's a weird book, but I think a lot of the stuff in it was good. I was thinking Margaret Barker's...

**MH:** I thought you were going to do a Tom Horn book. (laughs)

**DB:** (sighs) No. Get out of here. *The Temple Roots for early Christian Liturgy*, I think is what it's called. Her overall point—she has some weird stuff in there—but some really awesome stuff. Her overall point I completely agree with (and Mike alluded to this) is that temple liturgy didn't go away in early Christianity. This whole notion that a lot of free-church Protestants have (and I'm not knocking one—I was one, am one—I don't know) who want to go back to house church... "That's the real church, man, that's the Early Church!" Well, that's because you're being persecuted, okay? That's because you're kicked out of the synagogues. As soon as Christians could build buildings, they did! Don't take everything as prescriptive that you see with this whole "New Testament church" movement. That isn't even a thing. What New Testament church? They're different in different cities. Some were maybe still close to the synagogue. Some were kicked out. Some were just starting in houses. Some were mainly Gentile. Some were only Jewish. So let's stop that stuff. But what we do know for sure is when those buildings were built, the very buildings themselves—you still see this in Catholic churches, Orthodox churches, Episcopal churches—the actual shape of the sanctuary itself is modeled after the temple. You have the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The altar is there, where the actual body and blood of the Lord is. In the Early Church, this is what they thought, like Mike was alluding to: that the actual liturgy indicates that they are participating in the order of the cosmos. They really believe that stuff. And the liturgy was essential. This is not something like where you have Christian discipleship during the week and then you go to church. That wasn't a thing in the ancient world. You go to liturgy and then you really become a Christian. So that's how a lot of the Early Church saw it. Again, I'm not saying, "All of you go be Orthodox or Catholic." I'm not saying that. Don't hear that. But I do believe that is what early Christians believed, and that's why the liturgy was patterned... almost the entire thing—off of temple-like traditions. And so yeah—I just think that's really important and a lot of Protestants either don't even know that or don't realize the significance of that. So think twice if you're listening to this via podcast before you make fun of your Catholic buddies, okay?

45:00

**TS:** I also want to apologize to Tim Andrews at the house church. That's a shot across the bow for Tim!

**MH:** I think, again, the house church thing really has to be contextualized.

**TS:** Tim would appreciate we're in a coffee shop. I know how much he loves coffee.

**MH:** For him it's like, you get a... I don't know if you remember the episode with Tim on the podcast, but there's just a lot of personal dynamic there with... I'll put it this way: The whole modern house church thing really isn't a protest against liturgy or anything like that. This is just my experience. I'll try to make a good general point here. It's really composed of a lot of people who are tired of "playing church" in a modern context. Those people tend to sort of get together,

and once they get together and they start to see, "Okay, we've got 2 or 3 or 4 families here who kind of feel the same way," well, the strategy for them isn't to go back to this thing that, either they're not getting taught or there's some kind of dynamic going on there that legitimately has led to them being really discouraged in terms of the whole worship... not just worship, but what the community is supposed to be doing. So where are you going to turn? It's full of people who just see something that needs to be done and they're just going to do it. And they know it's imperfect. They're not saying every Christian in the world ought to do this. They're not doing that. So it's not a movement in that sense. If you look at it that way, it's more of a reaction that's happening in a lot of places because... okay, what else do we do here? We don't want to just quit.

**DB:** And let me just clarify. I really did not mean to disparage any sort of house church thing. Please don't hear what I'm saying that way.

**MH:** Tim will forgive you (laughing).

**DB:** First of all, just to be in context, if anyone gives their life to Christ, period—that's the greatest miracle on earth. There's nothing greater than that. So if they're in a house church and that happens, that's cool. They're my brother or sister. I don't care.

**MH:** We'll pass the mic over here.

**Questioner:**

**The question I have is in reference to the New Testament Church—what we call the assembly, in contrast or mirror to the heavenly order. We kind of touched upon it earlier in your question. In the first part of 1 Corinthians 11, we look at the head covering issue, and I think there's actually a bigger picture there in that we're seeing the heavenly order or administration mirrored in the assembly, and the synchronicity between the order in heaven and the order on earth in the assembly. From that, too, do we also see a picture of (going back to the Old Testament) 1 Kings 22, seeing Micaiah there in the heavenly council determining the judgment against Ahab, and that there is a declaration that comes out of that assembly as to what is to happen. It's a declaration of the Most High. When we get to John chapter 20, we see that the Lord instructed the disciples that they had the power to forgive sins and to retain sins, again as an aspect of the assembly in judgment of the Church in order to maintain the glory of the Lord and the testimony of the Lord in the earth. So I guess the question and the statement is, do you see that aspect of the unseen realm mirrored in the New Testament assembly?**

**MH:** I'm going to start off with a general comment here. I think there is something to that because I sort of view... I didn't really get into this in *Unseen Realm* too

much but I sort of see what church is supposed to be as a community and as a family. Of course family includes these things. It includes rebuke, it includes accountability. It includes encouragement to live a holy life the way you should. I see what should go on at church (as far as the believing community) as kind of "council training on earth," if I can say it that way, because our ultimate destiny is to be rejoined to this thing: the Kingdom of God, the rulership of God, the family of God. And we already are, but we're not yet. That sort of thing. So just generally, it would be... Again, I'm not saying that we should invent bizarre ritualistic things to kind of align with our imagination for these elements. I just wish that we would talk about these things in church so people would be more conscious of, "Well, this is what we are! This is what we're supposed to be. This is what we're going to be." To create a little bit of continuity between the present... between the already and the not-yet. To just be conscious that we're on this trajectory. This thing that we're doing now has a relationship to what went on before—not just in terms of the Israelite community, but in the wider family of God. You're going all the way back to Eden. And that's where it's going to wind up. I don't know if you want to say anything more specific there.

**DB:** Well, he did ask the specific question about the women, the head-coverings, the angels thing... the order of creation.

**MH:** I thought you were saying it's bigger than that.

(Unintelligible remark, followed by brief conversation about a technical problem with the podcast about the head-covering issue)

**MH:** Do we even want to get into this? (laughs)

**DB:** No, I would refer back to the episode. But I will say something about that. That is a really highly contested passage. The best scholars in the world still argue about that passage all the time. I haven't made my mind up on it. I know Mike is convinced of that argument, but I've had some close friends that really, really disagree with that argument—a lot. So I think it makes sense of the evidence, but at the same time, I'm an egalitarian. My cards are on the table. I think Galatians 3 (that neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female) is the ideal of the celestial community—that's the ideal. But in the "already" there are certain sociological phenomena where you don't want to just tear up society and change it and say, "Oh, you were wrong, you jerks!" So that's part of being a humble servant: "Be a good husband, be a good wife, be a good slave." Yes—a slave! "Be a good slave, be a good this," but the notches in the rock are already being chipped away of the edifice of this world. But when they gather in community—and not everyone agrees with me on this—but I think early on in the New Testament what we see is this kind of image of an egalitarian world view. Not necessarily egalitarianism. And if you don't know what I mean by "egalitarian," I just mean that male and female roles are equal in the earliest Church. It means more than that, but like a universal equality in the people of

God, but that includes roles. But that goes away really quickly because I think of the delay of the *parousia*, the delay of the coming of Christ. Because when you have this apocalyptic fervor and everything is imminent and everyone's like, "Resurrection's going to happen right now! The day is nigh!" and that starts to die off, it's like, okay, we're going to need to tether this thing down. We're going to need the bishops to be a man of one wife and all that kind of stuff. So this is just my view—I think that, yes, there is some heavenly and earthly order going on in those texts, but I think the ideal of becoming like the angels in resurrection that Jesus and Paul talk about is one that's not given in marriage, Jesus will say—"being like the angels in heaven". He does not say "the fallen ones." He says "being like the angels of heaven who are not given in marriage." That's kind of the celestial ideal, that there won't be any need for procreation in that glorified sense. And I still can't wrap my mind around what the heck that means! I've tried for years. But I think there is some sort of embedded egalitarian sense about the vision of the Kingdom. So in cultures... Now you can push back on this, Mike, if you disagree...

**MH:** I think it can work in either model.

55:00

**DB:** I think in cultures, though, that don't have the restraints that the Greco-Roman world and the ancient Jewish world had... Some of those freedoms can be experienced in the Church. That's just my own personal view on that. I'm open to being persuaded otherwise, but it seems to me that if Paul could have allowed all the freedoms that he wanted, he would have done them. But it's one of those—you care for the weaker brother, you don't try to mess up society, you try to honor and love your neighbor, as well. You don't just go around pointing fingers in their faces telling them they're wrong. That's called being a jerk and not loving them.

**MH:** Let's take the heavenly council, okay? I think it can work in either model—the egalitarian or complementarian model. If you don't know what that term means, it's the male leadership kind of thing. I think you could actually construct an understanding of the relationship in either respect. In the Council, you have all *elohim*, defined as "spiritual beings." But there still is hierarchy, there still is order, there still is role and rank and all this stuff, but on another level they're all equal. So there's ontological equality and then there's this hierarchy of relationships, and that's how the Council runs. So you can easily transpose that to an earthly order. You could look at it and say this: "Well, in the Edenic beginning, both male and female were given the command. "This is your role now within God's intended family relationship, where you are supposed to be part of this." In other words, the commands are given equally. And you can sort of riff off that to talk about an egalitarian model. And it goes back and forth all the time. Somebody else will bring up, "Adam named the animals, and in Ancient Near Eastern culture that denoted authority and Eve doesn't do any naming." It just goes back and forth all the time. There are elements of both in the descriptions that you get.



**DB:** Just one little thing there... BUT it's not until Genesis 3—mind you, in the *curse formula* of Genesis 3, it's the man lording over the woman.

**MH:** Depending on how 3:16, yeah... Which is a real controversial verse.

**DB:** Just throwing that out there!

**MH:** The whole egalitarian/complementarian thing is just... I remember the first one of these annual meetings I ever went to was in 1994 and they were debating it then. It just never goes away. If you're a long-time reader of the blog, I did a series on this and I invited John Hobbins, who is a pastor (and his wife's also a pastor, so he's egalitarian). And the invitation was, "Make me care about this." (laughter) That was his mission. I said, "Make me care." Because I don't really care about the model. I care more about the abuses in either direction. I can argue both sides of this until your mind becomes numb. You get into, "Well, did Junia... did it have a circumflex over the *alpha* in the original text, because that distinguishes the gender." Really? Now we're down to determining doctrine based on the presence of a circumflex, which they didn't use—a little diacritical mark over a letter, which they didn't use in the earliest manuscripts and uncial scripts? But that's where we're at now? (unintelligible comment from audience) At the end of it, I told him he failed. I still didn't care!

1:00:00 **DB:** I hate being this guy, but on the Junia thing, it is interesting—no, I'm not doing the uncial thing, I don't care about that—but what is interesting is in medieval manuscripts, you actually have scribes change it to a male name (Junias) because they're not down with having a female apostle! They actually change it in some of the medieval manuscripts. That's pretty significant. They're like, "We don't want Paul to say that!"

**MH:** I think that the more interesting question, and you can sort of back-track it from this, is to ask, "Will there be gender roles in the New Heaven and the New Earth? There is certainly hierarchy because we inherit the nations and all that kind of stuff, but it's not gender-specific. So if you want to approach it from sort of where it ends and then walk it back, that's going to determine how you look at it, too. It's just one of these things that can be endlessly articulated and debated from both sides. I'm more interested in how the men and women within your community are relating to each other as imagers. I don't care what role they have, necessarily. How are we doing this? How are we a family?"

**DB:** Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. I want to be very clear. Just because I said I was egalitarian, these are not issues to divide over. Some of my best friends in the world are hard-core (like raging) complementarians—like "woman, get in the kitchen complementarians." I'm making fun of them, but seriously—these are not issues to divide over. The unity in Christ is way more important than this.

**MH:** And you know, I'm a big believer that God understands that we're not omniscient, so why should we have to become omniscient to think we're pleasing God? I think God has a very realistic view of who we are and how we're able to figure things out.

**Question from audience: Could you maybe tie in the (unintelligible)? What has God called you to?**

**MH:** I think you could. Ultimately, that's going to be between the individual and God.

**DB:** I agree with that.

**MH:** One of the things that Hobbins... I don't know if he asked it in one of the posts or if it was a conversation or something... I actually got this in some job interviews, too. "What if one of your students or your daughter or something says, 'I feel the Lord has called me into ministry.' What are you going to say?" And my answer was, "Do a good job!" You've got to know the lay of the land here. Some people are going to look at this and hear the reason why... they're going to look negatively at it. Others are going to look positively. You need to know what you're getting into. I would look at my daughter and say, "I can argue this both ways, and I'll go through the whole thing with you. But at the end of the day, if you sincerely feel that the Lord wants you to do X, Y, or Z, then you need to obey. And if it's the wrong decision, we have to believe that God will alert you to that. He will do something to change your mind. He will steer you differently. But for right now, if you're being honest with God, this is what you do. You obey. Your conscience is clear." So my role would be supporting her to do that, to be obedient as best as she knows what to do or how to do it. If we get to heaven and God comes to me and says, "Yeah, Burnett was right and you should have all been egalitarians," I'm not going to say, "(Groan), I don't want to be here anymore! This just ruins it for me!" (laughter)

**DB:** For the record, I did not say we all have to be that. That's exactly the opposite of what I was saying.

**Questioner:**

**I would like to go back to something that you mentioned, Mr. Burnett. Basically that in the first century there was this fervency that the resurrection was imminent, and that as time went on, the posture changed, right? I want to touch on this book by Garry Willis, *What Paul Meant*, and he sort of said that Paul's main drive for everything he did was that he saw the risen Christ—that's what drove him every day. You can see that from when you read his epistles. When you go to church every week you hear about the atonement, you don't really hear about the resurrection unless it's Easter. (laughter) My question is, why did that happen—not that it's an**

**overemphasis because for all I know that's Providence, because he knew it would take a while for him to get back here. But how does that sort of disconnect us from the bigger picture of heaven and earth being together and what the end goal is?**

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**DB:** What a fabulous question. To address the "preaching on the atonement and not the resurrection," there is no atonement without the resurrection. Period. Period. Let's be very clear about something. People will read over this text and not pay attention to the gravity of it, but if you look at the end of Romans 4—this is especially for my Reformed buddies, okay—at the end of Romans 4, Paul makes something very clear about what the resurrection does. He says that Christ died for our transgressions (our sins) but he was raised for our justification, which could be translated "vindication" or even "deliverance." You're being "justiced." Justice is being done. So there is no justification without the resurrection. Period. So if you ever preach the cross—You pastors who are listening to this, listen up! If you ever preach the cross without the resurrection, shame on you! Let me tell you something: If the cross is what solves the problem... Again, I have a huge problem with preachers and theologians that put too much emphasis on atonement on the cross. I'm not saying the cross doesn't take care of atonement, okay—just hear what I'm saying. If you preach just the cross for atonement, what you get is you get the Road to Emmaus story put right in your face. And what happens when you have a dead Jesus and no resurrection? What happens? People go away saying, "It's over. It's over. It was all BS. We can all go home. This is garbage. Nothing happened." But with the resurrection, that is the vindication, that is the validation, that is the justification. And man—you cannot have atonement without the justification. So there's that.

(sigh) Now that that's off my chest... The problem with the delay of the *parousia*, I think personally that this is a very big problem. There's a really interesting book that just came out by Christopher Hayes.

**MH:** I posted something on it.

**DB:** You did post on it?

**MH:** That it was available, and the gist of it, yeah.

**DB:** *When the Son of Man Didn't Come*, I think is what it's called. It's dealing with this problem, and it's a whole collection of Christian theologians, biblical scholars, dealing with this problem. Because it is a huge problem in early Christianity. It caused a lot of ethical and ecclesial issues because when you're in radical, Jewish apocalypticism (Mike has talked about this and I've talked about this before), but resurrection is an eschatological thing. It's an end-of-time thing in Judaism. There isn't some sort of resurrection and then other stuff later. It's like resurrection is—that's it! The covenant's been fulfilled, they're glorified, they live forever. That's it. So when you have Jesus raised in the middle of history and the

great resurrection doesn't take place, you have a problem. Right? Early Jewish believers and Gentile believers who knew the promises of Israel being taught to them—either through catechesis or just teaching Scripture or whatever—this was a big issue. I think it still is a big issue for historians dealing with the problem. That's why I think these books are really important to address. I'm not sure if I agree with the answer that that book gives, but it's a really helpful book, nonetheless.

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But you mentioned something about how resurrection affects what we do in church now, and I would say, "Yes and Amen." Every act that we do in the world that brings life to the world testifies to the truth of the resurrection. So some people will say (you'll hear this quite often, actually—I've heard this from my pagan anthropologist friends who have PhD's from UT), "Why would you persist and continue in Christian ministry" if you can't show them any sort of tangible hope? Say, trying to set up an orphanage or something in a low-income community to try to deal with the problem of unwanted children and the government shuts it down... Is that a failure? Did the work of God fail in that community? But if you believe in the resurrection—and this is critical, this is so important. In 1 Corinthians 15, all that highfalutin' theology about resurrection ends with one of the most important statements in the entire New Testament. He says, "Therefore..." (because of all that stuff I just said) the work you do now is not in vain." Because if we're thinking of resurrection as vindication, then everything you do—no matter on the world's scope it might "fail," when we're getting our hands bloodied and sweaty for working for Jesus in the world. And the world might say, "Ha, ha—look at those failed projects." Well, in the resurrection, buddy, those are not going to be failed. On the resurrection all that work will be vindicated. The resurrection is literally the core of all Christian work in the world. All Christian service in the world is centered on the resurrection because we really believe that God is literally breathing new life into the world! We really believe that Spirit that brought a man up from the dust has brought a man up from the dust again. We believe that! We believe that new creation has already begun, and we're either down with that project and we're involved with it, or we're not. The hinge of whether we are or not is how much do we really believe in the resurrection? Because the problem of Christian ethics, I would say, is anchored in the problem of the resurrection. Why you don't have good Christian ethics in liberal Christianity is because they don't believe in the resurrection. This is the reason. If you have a 100-percent assured faith that God vindicated Jesus and literally raised him from the dead, then guess what: you can do anything! You can do anything. There is nothing that can separate you from the power of God in Christ. Because he's demonstrated it by raising Christ from the dead. I'm preaching now, I'm sorry, but that's a big deal. That's a big deal. (laughter) I'm a preacher, too, okay? I'm not just a....

**MH:** You're not letting him have any more coffee?

**TS:** Push the coffee away from him! Anybody?

**Questioner:**

**This one's for you, Mike. It's a hermeneutic question. I believe in your Deuteronomy 32 world view because it has explanatory power with phenomena we experience. But what is the method for interpreting the Scripture. Obviously you don't take their cosmology about the flat earth, the dome. You don't bring that over. You leave that and take the theological message over into our realm. How do you make that distinction? What's the process you go through to make those decisions? "Okay, this is real, we can take this over here, but this is just God using their beliefs to tell them something."**

**MH:** For me, it's about general revelation and special revelation and its relationship to our own experience as embodied beings. What I mean by that is, you have biblical writers that God chose who lived at a certain time and place and have certain access to understanding the natural world and all these limitations. And God is completely aware of that. He allows them to express spiritual ideas—points of theology—using the tools or the illustrations or the analogies, or even—more than that—handling general revelation in a specific way as part of this communication. So God knows what they're doing. He picked them to do the job. He knows what the ultimate reality is and what it isn't. He has a perfect command of creation and what-not. Nevertheless, he lets them do this. He lets them communicate the way they do it with their limited knowledge.

**Questioner:** Yeah, but his message... He never says to them, "Hey, no—the world really isn't like that, it's actually like this."

**MH:** And what I take from that is God could care less about what they knew. We can look at that and because we live in the embodied world and the knowledge of science grows, our knowledge of the natural world grows. If God were doing the same thing today (asking one of us to produce this passage) we would use completely different language and analogies and we would think about that and express that point in a completely different way. And we might mess it up in terms of science! If God did it a thousand years from now, then our touch-points with this embodied world and how we think about it and how we either think it relates to the spiritual world or how we use it to express what's going on in the spiritual world—that's going to change. It can be tested with the tools of science because it's part of the embodied world. All that's different than claims and assertions made in Scripture about the disembodied world—the non-human world. We are dependent on God's trustworthiness as he prompts people to express these ideas in certain ways, even though the vehicle to express those things might be something that we can test today and say, "Well, that's not really the case here." But that's not the same as the assertion. The vehicle for expressing the assertion isn't the assertion. They're two related but different things. And if it's not subject to the tools and analysis of the natural world

1:15:00

(because by definition it isn't, because it's not part of the natural world), then we can't use the thing that we can test through the tools of science to test the things that science cannot deal with, that are outside the natural world. That's the way I parse it.

**Questioner:** You draw a line... Whatever's on that side of the line of reality is what he's trying to tell us.

**MH:** I think the obvious point is we can't use the tools of science to test something that isn't material. It would be absurd.

**Questioner:** Hypothetically, the whole Divine Council worldview... they had that. Maybe God used that to express theology. Now how do we know that we can take that along with the theology as being...

**MH:** I think in that case, the uniqueness or the phenomenon of the election of Israel... In other words, Israel is made different, not because of any quality of it, but because God wanted a relationship with this people. By definition, what's going on with the other people, the people surrounding that? If they're not in covenant relationship with Yahweh, the Most High (whatever term we want to use here), then by definition they're outside that covenant relationship. That lends a coherence to the idea that... they do worship other gods, so where did they come from? You could reduce this to a philosophical discussion here: Can you have more than one Most High? Can you have more than one uncreated being? (All these things that are required of Yahweh.) So philosophers and theologians, the work they do, the thinking they do, the way they try to probe the propositions for coherence, I think they're useful at this point.

So you can say certain things about the entities in the spiritual world, the relationship of those entities that transcends something enscripturated. You can probe it in different ways. That's different than trying to use the tools of science to do that. You have to use the tools of something else.

**Questioner:** It does have explanatory power in our realm. I just don't like going backwards... like "This explains this, therefore that's real. Now I can go back to the Scripture..."

**MH:** I don't know what you mean by "going backwards."

**Questioner:** Well, we take the Divine Council worldview, bring it into our realm and explain some things about spirituality...

**MH:** Let's wipe Deuteronomy 32 off the table.

**Questioner:** Or anything... take anything that way.

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**MH:** Okay, God has entered into a covenant relationship with one people. Therefore, He hasn't entered into a covenant relationship with other people. They worship other gods. Where do those other gods come from? Do we have other gods that are equal ontologically with the True God? Did they create the other gods? Did they create themselves? I don't need Deuteronomy 32 to raise and address any of those propositions. I can use other tools to do that.

**Questioner:** Oh, sure. It would make sense, because it's logical. But yet... How much do we hang our hat on that? Do you see what I mean?

**MH:** What is "that" in your sentence?

**Questioner:** The world view. We're building a world view on logic, which is flawed whether you're an ancient Israelite or us—we're going to have problems either way.

1:20:00

**MH:** I think when it comes to propositional assertions about the spiritual world, we're going to be back to sort of your bedrock thing—that we do have to take it by faith. My head just operates in simple ways. When I say, "take a proposition by faith," then mentally I have to backtrack to things like, "Is there a God or not? If there is, then what would be true about him as opposed to things that would be less coherent to say about him?" So you sort of (I hate to use this term) "flesh out" the person of God in terms of who he is, his uniqueness, and all these different things.

**Questioner:** You build it and it changes, of course, as you go along. If you don't have that you don't have anything.

**MH:** That's all the backdrop to saying... In an ultimate sense it would be, but what I'm saying is that taking something by faith doesn't mean it's unreasonable or even kind of unbiblical. Do you know what I mean? Or irrational, that sort of thing. That's all I'm going for here.

**DB:** I know it was directed towards Mike, but I've asked that same question of Mike many times. My answer to that, I think, that helped me... because I'll just be real candid. I had huge faith issues when I started finding this stuff. *Huge* faith issues. But what helped me was a robust theology of incarnation. What I mean by that is kind of a Karl Barth-type view that there is a hierarchy in revelation (not the book of Revelation—the idea of God revealing himself). The highest form of God revealing... The text says this—you don't have to get it from philosophy—Hebrews 1 says this, that God embodied in the flesh of Christ is the ultimate revelation of who God is. So the other forms of revelation pale in comparison to the reality of the incarnate Christ. Why that's significant to this particular question, I think, is because all other ways of revealing how the spiritual world really is or what the ontology (the reality) of the beings are... I'm writing on the celestial bodies as gods. Do I think the stars are gods? No—not at all, not even remotely.

But it's how the ancients could have conceived them in some rough way. God didn't change their cosmology at all, but he incarnates it.

And this is where Peter Enns is helpful, I think, to this conversation. Peter Enns wrote a book that got him fired from Westminster called *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*. He deals with these issues, and the way he deals with them is, he deals with revelation and inspiration of Scripture the way the incarnation is dealt with. Scripture is like the incarnation of Jesus. It's a completely, fully human book in every way—writing as humans of that time would have understood. Completely human. But incarnate with the word of God. In the same way, Jesus was fully human in every way. He would have missed a free-throw or stubbed his toe, but he was fully God. If we believe that to begin with, as the ultimate revelation, like number one, then as we're going down the list we have to say that the other conceptions of what is real and what isn't real about the gods or about cosmology is secondary and may not be right at times. But it's how God reveals himself in that context. And so I think the incarnational point helps me, at least, deal with some of the difficult things like, "Man, I don't have a correspondent reality to some of this stuff." Well, the revelation that's made within that context is almost more important than the details that frame it. That's my answer. I don't know if that's helpful.

1:25:00

**MH:** I would agree that the framing is flexible; the framing will change. Of necessity, it will change because—especially if you're talking about using the natural world or our experience to frame something—by definition that's going to change. I think, actually, that's why God was okay with it. In other words, he knows that the method he's allowing to operate to communicate these ideas will change. So it isn't the mode, it isn't the expression, it isn't the framing. Those are just vehicles. Those are just tools to expressing things that transcend all those other things—the way it's framed.

Trey just said this place closes in an hour or so, so we need to keep moving. Anybody else with a question?

**Questioner:**

**You've probably talked about this somewhere and I haven't come across it, but in relation to Hebrews 3, the mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs. You also have this thing that through the eternal purpose of Christ—through the Church—we're supposed to be making known this manifold wisdom to the rulers and authorities on high places. With that context, I have a two-part question. One, do you have any additional clarity on the difference between the lesser divine beings that we see being judged in Psalm 82 versus the demons that Jesus is interacting with, casting out, and saying that his disciples would be marked by dealing with those? And then, what do you think (and what do you see is) our interaction today as the Church, in terms of making things known to these lesser gods, these lesser**



**divine beings? So obviously there is a lot we're supposed to be telling them. What are we supposed to be communicating, and what's the purpose of it?**

**MH:** Let me do the second one. I got an email yesterday, last night actually, from a guy who is going to be coming to Bellingham (where I work) to film me for something... I can't even remember what I was supposed to be filming. But he says now, "I was able to find a place and I looked at it online, I got pictures and it's the kind of backdrop I want [for all these other reasons]. But it's in a yoga studio." So he wanted to know if I was bothered by that, because we go to the yoga studio. He said, "I called them to ask if their pictures were accurate because they've got the Buddhas and the idols and stuff like this. Do you think we're getting in trouble if we show up to film here?" Basically, are the gods going to get us, that kind of thing. And I said, "I'd be thrilled to take them to task and talk about things on film that are going to undermine any goal they have. So fill the room!" I just gave him the passage in Ephesians about how the powers are defeated and what-not. To me, it's fun to go to a place to say things that are going to undermine them. So bring it on! Let's do that. I tried to amp it up a little bit just so he would get the point.

Here we are back to the resurrection, because the resurrection is constantly linked with the defeat of the gods. You either believe this or you don't. I don't want to minimize these stories we hear out in the mission field—this place is under dominion and bad things happen. People even get hurt or even physically assaulted—yeah, that happens. You know why it happens? It happens because it's a battle. And I think that part of telling the powers the way it is involves just stuff like this. If you don't go to these places, if you don't assert truth in these places, they're not going to learn anything! (laughing) They're not going to learn what they're supposed to learn. They're not going to hear what they're supposed to hear. The people aren't going to hear what they're supposed to hear. And so, why should we necessarily adopt a sort of cringing defensive posture in these situations? So that is how I process that whole, "We've got a message to get out there, and people aren't the only ones listening to it and observing what we're doing in the name of Christ" and so on and so forth.

The first part... Remind me again what the first part was.

**Questioner:** I was just asking if you had any additional clarity on the difference between the lesser divine beings from Psalm 82 and the demons that Jesus interacts with.

**MH:** Yeah, there's a little bit about this in **Unseen Realm**. The quick and dirty answer is: you have to think in terms of rebellions. We've got a rebellion in Genesis 3 that involved one divine being and, of course, people. We've got another rebellion in Genesis 6:1-4. All the traditions, whether it's the Mesopotamian backdrop with the Apkallu, whether it's Second Temple material

(and you also get hints of it in the Old Testament)... that those responsible for doing that in Genesis 6 are put in prison until the eschaton—the time of the end. It's very consistent. So now you've got the one, you've got a group that's in the Abyss, and then you've got the Babel story. Those are the gods of the nations. They're not these other two groups. It's a third different group of rebels. The demons that Jesus encounters (again the texts—Old and New Testaments and outside—are very consistent here)... but what we think of as a demon is not technically, precisely... What's being talked about there are the disembodied spirits of the dead Nephilim. They're the next generation of these guys. You get hints of that in the Old Testament when you see visions of Sheol and you get the Rephaim there. This is where the idea comes from. It gets more (to use the stupid pun again) "fleshed out" in Second Temple literature because the Second Temple literature is heavily dipping into the original Mesopotamian context for Genesis 6:1-4. So now you've got four groups: the Satan figure (the serpent), the Genesis 6 dudes (the Watchers), you've got the gods of the nations, you've got the disembodied spirits of the Watchers (who are also called Watchers, but also called "demons"). All these different groups. You have *sedim* in the Old Testament, which is really not a demon like we think of in the Gospels. *Sedim* is a territorial entity—that's what the Akkadian term means. It's really referring to one of these gods of the nations, which makes perfect sense in Deuteronomy 32 because they're the ones the Israelites get seduced by. It's actually a coherent picture, even though it looks messy to us because we're not familiar with the vocabulary or the context.

**DB:** Yeah, about the demon issue... Why that's a little complicated in the New Testament is there's more than one meaning of that term.

**MH:** And you also get a conflation. When you get to the Hellenistic period onward... See in the Old Testament you can take a term like *malakim* (angels) and that refers to like a third-tier of the Divine Council, different from the sons of God in rank—not ontology but in rank—but when you get to the Hellenistic period, they start to use *angelos* the way the biblical writers would think of *elohim*. *Elohim* is the generic word for a spiritual being. *Angelos* becomes that for the good guys. For the bad guys you get *daimon* and *diamonion*, which are neutral terms. But especially when they're pluralized, it's the bad guys. So you get this conflation of the terminology.

**DB:** So this is really important that they're neutral terms because there are two main senses that the New Testament will use the *daimon*, demon, term. One is when you're talking about the Gospels. This is really important. I think the Enochic background is behind those particular demons. Me and Mike agree on that.

**MH:** And the plural is important when they're grouped.

**DB:** The narrative—the way the narrative frames them—is really important. How historiography works in Greek is you can front-load the title of a being in the beginning with adjectives and you don't have to repeat them later. Like, if I've told you once what they are, I'm not going to tell you twenty more times. So when you're going through the Gospels... Take Luke, for example. Luke at the first casting out of a *diamon* in Luke 4, what you have is the narrator telling you that this is an evil, unclean spirit. If you're hearing this in the Greek world, there are good *daimons*, there are apathetic *diamons*, it's a plethora of different ones. But these are particular—the evil and unclean spirits. So that's the one form of *diamon*. But then the other one that Paul uses is not the same as the Gospels. When Paul uses the term "demon" in 1 Corinthians 10—and this is a very important distinction—this is not what the Gospels are talking about.

**MH:** Yes, that's the exception because of what he's quoting.

1:35:00

**DB:** These are the lower-tier gods. If you think this is just an Old Testament thing, it's not. In the Hellenistic world, they used the term *diamones* for these lower-tiered deities, as well. In Plato's *Laws*, it's written like a discourse, where you have like three people talking to each other. The Athenian talks about how Kronos (the high god of time) established how the earthly dominions would work, and he says that Kronos in his wisdom saw that humans, left to their own devices would just end up killing each other. They need to be ruled over just like humans rule over goats or beasts. And so they're the *diamons*. So those are those spirits that are placed over different territories of peoples to rule over them. When the Septuagint comes along (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) and they're trying to relate these concepts in the Greek world, in Deuteronomy 32 (which mentions the gods they went after in the wilderness), the Septuagint translates those *diamones*. Because in the Greek world, they already have categories... they know what territorial spirits are, so it's an easy translation for them. They would understand that. So it's very important to know that term can cover any one of these beings.

**MH:** And you can tell that Paul is thinking of that concept because he quotes Deuteronomy 32.

**DB:** Yeah, he literally quotes Deuteronomy 32:17 there, which is the territorial spirits of the *diamons*.

**Questioner:** So just to be super-clear, to go back to the first part of your answer: When it comes to what we're supposed to be making known to these rulers and authorities, it's really nothing more than just a proclamation? Is that what you're saying?

**MH:** I think it's the proclamation of what happened at the cross and the resurrection, a reminder of what the story is now. If you think about the gods of the nations in particular, the resurrection means that we had this system in

biblical thinking where God himself set this system up as a punishment at Babel, "I'm disinheriting you, I'm taking Abraham and I'm going to make my own nation. This one's allotted to this," and all that. And so a Gentile (and this was even part of their own literature—they don't have to be reading the Septuagint to get this) is thinking, "Well, I'm supposed to worship these other gods. If I don't do that, I'm going to get hit by a thunderbolt, or the world's going to descend into chaos." So essentially what Paul's telling the Gentiles is, "Look, the God who set this up and punished you with it is now saying, 'Their authority to rule over you is over. It's done. I'm not only saying you're allowed to forsake them—I'm demanding it. I'm saying it's time for you to come back into my family. They have no (if we want to use this kind of terminology) *legal authority* to demand your worship. So tell them to go straight to you-know-where.'" He's demanding that they move back into the family by embracing the risen Messiah. So that is part of the message, if we want to just focus on them.

**Questioner:** You might call that "Reversing Hermon?"

**MH:** Yeah—it is! Again, I go into a lot of the details of this in that book, which is going to be out in February or March, but reversal is a big deal. Think about what all this means. We talk about "mirroring" and "reversing." So whether you're Jew or Gentile (but let's just think about Gentiles)... "I'm going to abandon these gods that you Jews out there said we're supposed to be worshiping because your God set this up, and now you're saying that God came to earth incarnated in Christ, died and rose again, and now I'm not bound or under bondage to these other gods," who, frankly, as things are chaotic on earth, that's a reflection of their attitude toward the people they rule. So as I enter into the Kingdom, their kingdom diminishes. As I will inherit "already but not yet" the resurrection status, I will live but they will die. They will be destroyed, because that's ultimately where the eschaton leads. So you have all these "already but not yet" and these reversal themes that are really tied to what we call the "Deuteronomy 32 world view" and its reversal because of the resurrection. Paul (and he's not the only one)... New Testament writers are tracking on how one thing counteracts the other. And that's the way it's supposed to be.

1:40:00

**DB:** I think your question was great because when we're saying, "What are we supposed to be announcing"... Announcing the Kingdom of God—the reign of the God of Israel—is literally the opposite of all these other gods' rule and territory. What's interesting here is in Hebrews (and that's not the only place, especially in Romans—really big in Romans) it's not all Jews... Most Jews who are urban, sophisticated Jews, would think Paul is a lunatic. "What are you going around telling all these Gentiles not to worship their gods for? It's fine. They can worship them." A lot of Jews thought that was okay. The other Gentiles can worship their gods because, "Look, the Most High gave them over, so let them do their thing!" And they may go to texts like Deuteronomy that says God apportioned the gods over the nations, but if you look in Deuteronomy there's no

condemnation of the other nations to do that. What's interesting in the Septuagint, Paula Fredriksen...

**MH:** The Psalm 82:8, the Isaiah passage that links the resurrection with taking the nations...

**DB:** Right. But some Jews didn't read those texts! They didn't pay attention to those! "We don't like that stuff. We're not crazy apocalypticists. We're more sophisticated Greeks." I don't know why I did this. I don't think they did that, but whatever. (laughter) One reason why they would hate Paul and these other guys who were going around announcing the Kingdom of the One God taking these nations back is because in the Septuagint, and I'm getting this from Paula Fredriksen, a scholar from Boston College and a lecturer at Hebrew University in Jerusalem... She has a very interesting... It's really fascinating how much some scholars are now talking about this, that you've been talking about forever.

**MH:** I was in some session yesterday and that thought hit me that this is just kind of weird, I'm hearing this everywhere.

**DB:** Paula Fredriksen has a lecture (you can find it on YouTube) of Paul judaizing the Gentiles or something like that. Something about Paul's gospel. Look up Paula Fredriksen and Paul and you'll find it. She talks about how he's judaizing these Gentiles because he's having them worship the Jewish God and leave their gods behind. But in the Septuagint translation of Exodus (I don't remember the chapter and verse right off the top of my head because the Septuagint is different than the Hebrew on this), there's a passage that says, "Do not blaspheme God." Blaspheme doesn't mean, "You're not God." It just means, "Don't bring reproach on the deity. Don't be a jerk." When you translate that into Greek, they said, "Do not blaspheme the gods" and it was *theos* (plural). The way a lot of Greek Jews interpreted this was, "If you're going to pagan cities in the Greco-Roman world" (this is really important because it has implications for us right now)... When they would go into pagan cities (Jews who believe in the one God and worship the one God)... When you go into pagan cities, one of the things you do—this is just what you do to be a social good person—is each of these cities has their own patron deities, they have their own temples, and that's where all the big festivals are. That's where the parties are! The best craft beer is there. There's all kinds of temple prostitutes to have fun with, and all that. So you go to these cities and you're invited to these big... Let's say you're a pretty well-to-do Jew and you're going along the Roman Road and you're visiting Ephesus or you're visiting Corinth and, "Hey, come to the temple of Asclepius, we have this great banquet! It's the fourth month of whatever and we're celebrating Asclepius today and we're going to have a great feast and sacrifice food to him, and they're going to sing worship songs to him—it'll be a great party!" And Jews wouldn't go! And they're like, "Those unsocial jerks! The loyal separatist weirdos. They think there's only one God." And that's where the term *atheoi*, what we call "atheist" comes from. That's a Greek term that the Romans (and Greeks before

the Romans) would call Jews. They would call them *atheoi*. They didn't believe in the gods. They didn't honor the gods. But some Jews would take the Septuagint translation to mean, "Look, when you're in another city, don't blaspheme the gods. Go to the banquets. It's fine. Just be a good dude." So some of them would think that's cool. Just go eat the food put before you, be cool, don't be a jerk about it. Yeah, you have the one God but don't go blowing it in people's faces. The New Testament says quite the opposite. The New Testament says, "Nope—all of you are wrong. This is the time. The time is at hand. The reign of God is at hand. The Kingdom of God is at hand. That means the death of the gods." And some of these Jew would be like, "What the heck? Why do they need to die? Give them a break!" But do we not have this same problem today? This is why I think it's so important to know these things about history. Because we're talking about preaching the Gospel today, right? You go somewhere that some people may not know the Gospel or they have some really weird view of the Gospel and you're trying to correct it and you call someone to repent. When you call someone to repent and believe the Gospel—the Good News—and you're announcing, "Hey, the Kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus is Lord of the world right now, as we're talking and breathing his air." People will get pissed because they're saying, "Oh, so yours is the only way? Yours is the only truth? We can't have our truth, too?" This isn't new! People think that in the modern and post-modern world this is some new thing, like, "We're pluralists. You can believe whatever you want, it's fine." People were saying that in Rome! This is not new! Don't buy this stuff like, "Oh, we're the sophisticated post-enlightenment modern world who knows all this religion stuff is silly." In the ancient world they were saying the same thing of Christians and Jews! So don't buy that malarkey for one second. The Gospel still has the same power now as it had then, and people who had worshiped these gods in the temples all the time had just miraculously *stopped* and worshiped the one God because something happened to them. So I think that's a really important background to this.

**Questioner:**

**This question is probably directed to both of you guys. It revolves around the Deuteronomy 32 world view that you've sort of been discussing. In particular, when you're talking about the *elohim* that... God was like, "I wash my hands of you guys because you essentially turned your back on me and started doing things you're not supposed to, and now I'm placing these *elohim* over you. You're going to go over here to the Amorites. And you're going to go to Canaan"... all these guys, right? So when you think about particularly Hellenistic Greek... Forget about which Artemis we're talking about or Demeter, Apollos, Zeus... pick the god. Is that going to be the same in the Hebrew, the *elohim*, that was placed over that group? And then if we go east towards the Asian countries: China, Mongolia, Japan... they had a totally different set of... Can we make the connection between the Hebrew *elohim* in all those cases? Artemis was an *elohim*, and the**

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**ancestry worship that you have going on—Shinto—that also was an *elohim*?**

**MH:** *Elohim* is sufficiently elastic to incorporate all of that. *Elohim* means "spirit beings." How people conceived those spirit beings, how they talked about them, varies widely by culture. Now there's some consistency. "Oh, there must be a hierarchy. Some must be calling the shots. Some must be more powerful than..." So all of that gets projected and articulated and conceived of by analogy. But how they're talked about... There's going to be difference and differentiation and disconnect between cultures. That's pretty obvious. But what they *are* is still this spiritual being that is in a rebellious state against Yahweh, that sort of thing. And think about the names. A lot of them are related to geography. A lot of them are related to some perceived attribute, maybe some event that happens in a particular place, whatever. There's any number of reasons why a deity would get called certain things and associated with certain places. But again, that's how humans are processing these divine presences, as opposed to the ontology of the presences themselves.

**DB:** I don't know if the Bible says anything about that. In the ancient Jewish narrative, the 70 nations are just basically the ancient Mediterranean world, like in a disc. Like Spain being the ends of one end. Northern Africa on the other end. So I don't think they even know about China.

1:50:00

**MH:** They don't. And this is actually my sort of odd view of why the *parousia* was delayed. Because I think the *parousia* is directly related to the concept of the fullness of the Gentiles.

**DB:** Oh... interesting.

**MH:** God knows the world is a whole lot bigger than the world of Genesis 10. This was the world the disciples knew. But God knows better. So if you're going to include people everywhere who are not Israel (in other words, they're not in this unique relationship and this relationship is supposed to abound to all other nations and all that kind of stuff)... God knows what the real picture is. And so the fullness of the Gentiles could not be fulfilled in just that limited space, but they don't necessarily know that. They don't know that. My view is probably a little idiosyncratic, but I'm attaching it to that phrase, which can't be denied. That is a key element to the whole eschatological outworking.

**DB:** But I think there's a distinction that needs to be made there because I don't believe that the historical Paul knew anything about those nations or knew anything about the fact that they needed to be saved or whatever.

**MH:** I don't think he did either.

**DB:** It's one of those things where... I guess you'd categorize it as progressive revelation?

**MH:** I would say that God knew what his plan was and he doesn't hold Paul accountable for knowledge that he couldn't possibly have had.

**DB:** But Paul will say like, "I've reached the whole world."

**MH:** In his mind, this was his mission.

**DB:** The way the map is, he thinks he has.

**MH:** He thinks this is his job.

**DB:** Yeah—Tarshish, Spain, was the end of the map. The end of the world for him.

(unintelligible from audience)

**DB:** Yes. So this is what my paper is on Monday, actually. When Paul talks about "the resurrection" he doesn't actually use that term often. People think that's what he's talking about all the time, but he doesn't. He only uses it in a nominal form where he's describing the event. What God does is *synegeiro*, it's raising them up. I talked about this in the podcast before, but the event of the resurrection—part of that was destroying the rulers, principalities, and powers, which goes back to Psalm 82. Psalm 82 is the destruction of the gods at the arising of the divine figure. Early Jews were already saying this stuff before Jesus. Like 11Q *Melchizedek* at Qumran has the Melchizedek figure of Psalm 110 as the Psalm 82 figure who destroys the gods. And what does Paul quote in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 about God who arises to destroy the rulers and principalities and powers? He quotes Psalm 110! He quotes the same passage, saying that he'll make his enemies a footstool for his feet. So Paul thinks this is happening right now in Jesus. That Jesus right now—upon his resurrection—that's the role. He's destroying those principalities and powers so that *ethne*, the nations that are allotted to them, he can legitimately tell them, "Hey, you're free! You're like legitimately free! God's rule is at hand and you're literally liberated." Not some sort of like, you feel good in your spirit because God saved you. Yeah—you'll get excited, but some days will suck and you'll cry! So it's more the reality that spiritually and ontologically there is nothing that enslaves them anymore. So that goes back to his question earlier. That's what we're announcing. You announce that in China. You announce that in native tribes in the Americas, which the Europeans were horrible about and did not represent the Gospel when they slaughtered natives—it was just completely contrary to the Kingdom of God.

(unintelligible from audience)



**DB:** Not in the Bible.

**MH:** The biblical description is limited because of the knowledge of the writers.

**DB:** Their perspective was limited.

**MH:** If you're framing the question as the concept of the Deuteronomy 32 world view is to set Yahweh against all other beings that are hostile to him and his people against those who are not his people, well then it does apply. But if you ask Paul, Paul would say, "Well, I know what the job is. I gotta get to Spain!" Because that's what he knows and God doesn't expect him to know something he can't. And God's fine with that.

(unintelligible from audience)

1:55:00

**MH:** They're going to have similar ideas because some of the cultures are going to have similar cosmology. It's hard to frame these things in "heaven and hell" kind of terminology, but the "good place" would be where the gods are. The gods are up there where we don't live, and all that sort of stuff. And so when you die, since you're put into the ground in a lot of cultures, that's typically the realm of the dead. These places don't have latitude and longitude. But the conception of heavenly versus "this is where we get buried" is pretty consistent in a lot of places—not every one, but it's pretty consistent. So there's the realm that we hope to go to and then there's the realm that we don't want to stay there. We don't want to end up there. So there's a lot of overlap in terms of the cosmology that's going to... In a cultural engagement you can map some of that over. The whole idea of there being divine beings—a populated, animated spiritual world... again, that maps over real nicely. What's different about you going and presenting a gospel message to one of these other cultures is you are free from worshipping these other gods because of the incarnation, because of this event—the death and the resurrection and all that sort of stuff. So that's the element that is news. That's the different thing that we're tasked with taking them to.

**DB:** This isn't to make light of the problem. It was historically a very difficult problem, of "What do we do about the nations that aren't in Scripture that are out there?" But I agree with Mike that in terms of conceptually, it's easy to think there's more work to be done to reach the ends of the earth.

**MH:** I would add that if God thought it was necessary to communicate to every piece of turf, he would have waited until we had the internet to give us revelation. There would have been some human mechanism by which he would meet that goal. But apparently, because of what we have, God didn't care that that was immediately known or immediately accomplished. He knew how it would be accomplished—through people, through imagers, through members of his family. And God likes that! He likes us to participate in the task and enjoy the results and all these big-picture theological concepts you see from the very beginning. So I

like to say that these are God's choices. I'm not going to sit in judgment on God's choices. "Well, it would have been better if he had..." No, we're going to let God work the program like God wants to work the program and believe that he knows what he's doing and it will get done.

**Questioner:**

**I have a bunch of questions, but I have one I'd be remiss not to mention. My brother and I go back and forth about... and I know you guys joke about prophecy. I don't need a detailed answer, but just a place to start. This might have even been mentioned in a previous episode about the role Israel might play in the End-times. I know it's a massive subject. If that's somewhere else in another episode you can't point me to, I have a second question that might be a little bit easier that goes back about demons.**

**MH:** I think Israel has some role just because of the way we have events like Armageddon described... the *har moed*, the Mount of Assembly (which is Zion). These are terms that have a geographical context. Yeah, there's a heavenly Zion and all that sort of thing, and that's also part of the picture in Revelation. But there are other passages that are clearly portrayed as happening on earth. What would the earthly Zion be? Well, probably the Zion of the Old Testament. There are just things like that. I say it very broadly. That piece of turf has some role to play in the outworking of the *eschaton*, something like that. I don't really like the schemes and the systems and the charts and all that sort of thing because they all look beautiful until you compare them to something else—to a different view. Everybody sort of hides the outliers. I like to say they cheat. My own view is that you can't avoid that. I think Messianic prophecy was deliberately cryptic. I think it's going to be the same way the second time around. We will only understand these things in hindsight. So while it's part of Scripture, yeah we want to study that. We want to try to come to grips with what the end-game is at least. The kind of stuff we're talking about here tonight is very end-game oriented. Do that. But if you're trying to create a system that is going to answer every question, I don't really think that's a good use of Bible study time. That's just me, because I think it's going to work the same way it worked the first time around. You're only going to understand what all this means in hindsight.

2:00:00

**DB:** Just to add a book that might be helpful in how to begin to reread certain prophetic texts with an ancient lens that isn't always predictive in the sense that most people mean prophecy... Like, "This means this event, this means this event." There's a book by Brent Sandy called *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*.

**MH:** That one got him fired ultimately, too! (laughs)

**DB:** Oh, it got him... not surpri... golly... (sigh). Well, the book's great. It helps you see that a lot of prophetic texts that we would kind of de-ethicize (if that's even a word) are pushing people into a way of life and a way of being that's vindicated in

the *eschaton* rather than predicting timelines. He does a great job of showing how that works in its ancient Hebrew context. I really recommend that book because it helped me in my undergrad when I was asking those same questions. I read that book from a Hebrew prof that told me to read it and it helped me a lot.

**MH:** It's a very readable book because Brent used that in his undergrad classes where he taught at Grace.

**Questioner:**

**The second one was about demons, but more in reference to the spirits of the hybrid relation between fallen angels or spiritual beings and humans. They were released back into the earth. My question is, why would God just allow them to roam around being jerks still? (laughter) Why wouldn't he just destroy them as opposed to just letting them run around here?**

**MH:** I tend to file this under, "Why doesn't God just destroy everybody who does evil?" All the jerks, which of course would include all of us. I actually think it goes back to Genesis again, where we have imagers that are not only just us (we've got to remember the plurals—non-human spirits were also created as his imagers—like him, sharing his attributes, all this stuff). Part of that is free will. So the way I always explain this is that God is not willing to cheat. He's not willing to scrap the original plan and the original set-up so that he can win early. He's going to let it play out. He's big enough to let it play out and keep kicking the can down the road. Remnant theology is part of this. God is never going to let it die completely. If he has to intervene, he's going to do that. But he's going to let it play out and he's big enough to win while allowing this sort of chaotic set of conditions, rather than just saying, "Well, I'm kind of tired of this, just don't ever talk to me like that again." If you've ever seen *Time Bandits* where he just blows up all the evil ones. He's not going to do that. He's committed to the original plan. I actually always think of Job. Because, yeah, God could do that. But if he does that, then in an existential sense, questioning his judgment is on the table. Was this a bad idea to begin with? Couldn't you think of something better? All these questions. So I think he has to let it play out.

**DB:** I think he hit a vein that is super-super deep theological stuff. When we talk about... I love the question. It is a fantastic question: Why let them roam? I didn't have an answer to this until I started reading George Eldon Ladd in my New Testament theology class and I had a professor by the name of Dr. Roy Metts at Criswell who changed my life. He taught that the Gospel is about the Kingdom of God. It's not about individual sorts of salvation. It's that salvation comes through the reign of God being manifest. And what's critical about this is: Why does he let them reign? Why does he let them reign? Because the way that God rules is fundamentally... Or the way that it's revealed *ultimately*—not like in some passages in the Old Testament—but ultimately and climactically is through non-violent, non-coercive means. So that when Jesus comes on the scene, what do

2:05:00

the spirits ask him? When he's casting them out, they ask him, "Have you come to destroy us before the appointed time?" Now, mind you, what has he already announced at that point? He's already announced that the Kingdom of God is at hand, right? So in all conceptions, this is so important. This blew my mind when I actually got it. That's a really great question if you're a Jew and the spirits are asking you that. Because you're thinking when the kingdom of a god comes, this is a completely 110-percent irresistible event. Everyone will bow the knee. If not, you're toast! All the spirits will be killed immediately. You're just going to put your face in the sand before Yahweh, the Lord of Hosts, right? But that's not how it was revealed!

Now here's the problem with dispensational theology. Sorry if you're "Dispie," but I'm going to crush your hopes and dreams for a minute. (laughter) If you're unfamiliar with dispensational theology, a lot of listeners are going to be really mad at me right now. I'm obviously not a dispensationalist. The reason why that developed (only about 200 years ago, by the way) was you have this hard reaction that, "Well, the Kingdom of God was promised to Israel but they didn't accept it, so it got put on the back burner." Maybe some of you have heard this before. Why would someone think that, though? The reason someone would think that is because the Kingdom of God didn't show up the way that they thought kingdoms should show up. This is critical! This is so critical, and it plays right into your question. Because even the spirits were asking, "So have you come to destroy us now?" Even the people, when they're waving palm fronds, they're thinking, "Man, the son of David is here... he's going to kill everybody." And what does he do? *He dies!* So when God reveals how he rules—this will save people's lives! When God reveals how he rules the world, guess what it's not like? The kingdoms of this world. Because what do the kingdoms of this world do? What does Jesus say? What do the Gentile kings do? They lord it over them. They take it by force. They take it by sword. Caesar has a good news, too. He has a gospel. It's the same terms. He has a good news. They'll send his *angeloï*, his messengers, out. And guess what they'll tell the Germanic tribes? They'll say, "Hey, the good news of Caesar, the lord of lords, king of kings... he'll bring peace to the whole cosmos! All is for him and through him and to him, blah, blah..." Literally the same terms, I'm not kidding. Same Greek terms. But what happens if they don't repent? Slaughter. You kill them all. "Good news, good news! We're going to kill you all and take your women and stuff." Yeah—not so good news, right? But when the Good News is manifest of the Kingdom of God, it is fundamentally not coercive. God is a king like a good servant. When Jesus at the meal—and this is the climax of the Gospel... the passion narratives, where Jesus says, "How do they rule over you? They lord it over you. But how did I come to you? I came to you as a servant." This is fundamentally how he rules. So if he's just going around destroying everything, what difference is he from Zeus and everybody else? Fundamentally, he's a God of love before anything else. That demonstration of love, which is what Paul says the coming of Christ is—it's a demonstration of God's love for the world—that he doesn't destroy us. That while

we're still sinning, Christ dies for us. Not like, "Once we repent and get right and everyone puts their face in the ground."

2:10:00 **MH:** And we're supposed to mimic Christ in the same way—and Jesus himself says, "All the stuff that happened to me is going to happen to you, so don't be surprised." Again, this is the mechanism. It's very contrary to what you'd think.

**Questioner:**

**How does this affect the annihilist view of Hell? How would this same idea affect the view that some people believe that when you die and you go to Hell that you're basically destroyed? Would this affect that same thought process?**

**MH:** I would say that the result of that is you do not have eternal life in the family of God. It's the same outcome as if you took a non-annihilationist view of Hell. There's an eternal separation from the family of God. They both result in the same thing ultimately. You're supposed to be coming back to the family, coming back to the source of life. You're going back to Eden. You're going to live there forever. The New Heaven and New Earth, this is going to be your home. All these things that were supposed to be originally—now we're at the end and things come full circle. If you're not in the family of God, you don't inherit any of that. So whether you're annihilated or whether you're in an eternal Hell, the impact is the same, the effect is the same, the loss in terms of what you don't have is the same. I think that's a big part of that. In other words, it functions in both models. One does not violate those ideas as opposed to the other.

**DB:** I would take it just one step further, I think. It's not necessarily contradicting what Mike's saying in any way, but to take it the next step further, I do think there is a fundamental difference between eternal torment and annihilation. I don't think it's just like, "Well, they just don't inherit." Because in one, you have a God that eternally torments someone, and in one you have a God that doesn't. And so I particularly would hold to the annihilation view. I think it's more consistent with certain characteristics of God in the New Testament and in the Old, especially the end of Isaiah. I think the end of Isaiah was important for me. It's when the leeches never depart from the bodies that are laid out on the land. That's not meaning they're eternally being eaten, it's that they're never coming back. And I think the same image in apocalyptic is used. I'm obviously not the only one that says this. But again—I don't know for sure. Some people say we can know for sure, but I think it's against the character of God in the same kind of a way that we see dealings with children or people that don't know or stuff like that. I think it's similar. Not the same, but one thing I can say for sure is the main issues in terms of people's destinies in their response to the proclamation of the Kingdom was determined on their rejection or not. I'm not a Calvinist so I can't say that much about those who don't know, but for those that openly reject and willfully reject, I can tell you there's no hope for you.

**MH:** If you've followed the podcast through Q&A, I've gotten the Hell question before. Both views are on the table because of what David has said. It's kind of hard to know with complete certainty where it will land. But for me the thing that makes annihilation coherent is the language about the death of death. The last enemy to be destroyed is death itself. In other words, if you take that at face value, how can you still have somebody that's perpetually in the dying process? So that doesn't solve the issue with any completeness because you could say that's just metaphor and it fits over here in this way... I get that. But I think that language has to be dealt with. And it's there for a reason. But ultimately, the effect... Our lack of omniscience on that point doesn't change the outcome in either respect.

**Questioner:**

**I have a question about the Hermon/Bashan stuff. For one, I'm kind of bugged that I've preached and been there four times, taught on it, and all before I read the *Unseen Realm* because I never knew the pseudepigraphal connections. When Paul (Acts 9) is on the way to Damascus, you're probably going to go through Bashan area. And then Acts 26 when he talks to Agrippa about how he had proclaimed in Damascus and then Jerusalem and to the Gentiles. Is there any connection... Is Acts playing on that? I don't know if the area of Bashan extended that far up towards Damascus?**

2:15:00

**MH:** If you remember the Acts series, I think the reason Damascus is included in the narrative in Acts is because of the language back to Abraham. "Every place upon which your feet tread." It's a little bit different with Abraham, but the gist of that statement is repeated two or three times in the Old Testament and you get this language of where your feet tread. "That's your land. That's what you're going to inherit." And so Abraham gets to that point—that is the northernmost point before you get to the land divisions and all that stuff when he chases the captors of Lot, that's where he ends up. So I think that's theological messaging to say that. Because you're in this pattern: we're taking this message of the Jewish Messiah to the Jew first, and that's part of gobbling up all the places that would have been conceived of as Israelite/Jewish turf before we shift to the Gentiles. So I think that's why Damascus is in that. Not so much Bashan itself, but I think that's the connection point.

**TS:** Anybody else have a question real quick? We have three minutes until they're closing here.

**Questioner:**

**Out of all the Divine Council stuff that you've covered, is there any particular area that you think needs more research, more looking at? Or that you'd love to but don't have time?**

**MH:** Well, I would answer that by saying: Go to [moreunseenrealm.com](http://moreunseenrealm.com) and click on the tab that says, "What's next." Because there are probably 15, 20, a couple dozen places, that you can either drill down on or that I never got to in the book. So I'll answer it that way. Yeah—there's a lot to do! *Unseen Realm* is just the lay of the land. These are the orientation points where if you see it you're not going to be able to un-see it because you'll see it everywhere. You'll see the threads and the connections. That was the goal. So there's a lot yet to cover.

**Questioner:** If the gods are losing right now (that's the message that you're presenting)...

**MH:** The riff on this is already forming in my head, but go ahead!

**Questioner:**

**If the gods are losing right now, then how does the antichrist rise up in the end?**

**MH:** I approach it this way: That we tend to think that God is only at work or God only "shows up" in the overt and the spectacular. I think the gods are losing. I think the Kingdom is advancing. But most of the time—even in Scripture, frankly—you don't have a miracle on every page. In the life of the Early Church, yeah, you had spectacular things happen. But most of the day to day stuff was people doing what they're supposed to do. God providentially moved the plan along. I think we need to have a big view of Providence—that most of the time the evidence that God is working is not going to be overt and spectacular. It's going to be the unseen hand. It's easy for us as Americans in the West and sort of the way the culture is dipping into a post-Christian era to think, "Oh, the bad guys are winning." I've got news for you: There are other places in the world where the Church—even under persecution—is a mighty thing. That's just the way it is. We see the ballooning of the Church in China or Muslim countries or something like that. Some of that is overt, but a lot of it is just people—it's the "Bill Belichick" approach to biblical theology: Just do your job! And it will get done. So why will antichrist rise? Well, antichrist will rise because the bad guys are not going to go without a fight. It's not linked to who's winning or losing, or we're losing enough, or we're winning enough. They're not going to go without a fight. They know what they're in.

**DB:** And remember when the Good News is announced? Somebody gets crucified.

**MH:** Yeah. (laughs)

**DB:** Remember that. That's been the M.O. since the beginning. Those who suffer with him will be glorified with him.

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2:20:00

**TS:** All right. I think that's a good place to stop. To answer your question, "What needs to happen next?" is we're trying to get him to do this full-time so we can get to some of those answers because I don't want to wait another 10 years for *Unseen Realm 2*. I know I repeat myself.

**MH:** I get this lecture all the time! (laughing)

**TS:** We're working towards it and we couldn't do it if it wasn't for ya'll, too, so we certainly appreciate everybody—everything you do: contributing, being here tonight, telling your friends and family about Mike and David's content and the show and all this good stuff. I want to thank everybody for coming and thank everybody else out there who's not here who listens and supports us. We certainly appreciate it. I guess with that, we'll thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless. (Applause)