

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 127

Q&A 17

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Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 127: our 17th Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing?

MH: Good, what's new... anything?

TS: No, nothing's new. Although, as this episode's out, we are currently in the conference right now, so hopefully we're doing good by scoring a lot of good interviews.

MH: Yeah, hopefully. We went with some scheduled and we'll see what we come out with.

TS: I think it will be good. I can't believe, though, this is our 17th Q&A! Mike, probably with every answer you give you create thirty more questions.

MH: Yeah, we're probably going to run into a little bit of that...we always do. So that's... What can you say? People ask good questions and it just generates other areas. I'm unrepentant there. (laughter)

TS: As you should be. Hopefully they'll have enough information breadcrumbs to go follow the trail. We appreciate you doing it. And I guess we've got about seven or eight questions for this show, so you want to jump right in?

MH: Yep. Let's go.

TS: Our first one is from Matthew. He just listened to Episode 97, and in that episode Mike mentioned that seraphim indicate an Egyptian context and the cherubim a Babylonian context.

In light of the above, do the cherubim in the tabernacle and temple represent a Babylonian context for this cult element and not the genuine Egyptian context of the Exodus?

MH: Yeah, that's actually a good question... probably something that I could have clarified a little bit whenever Episode 97 happened. The short answer is: no, not necessarily. The issue here is the origin of the term *kerub*, *kerubim*, and that sort of thing. This is a term that as far as anybody in the field can discern (based on comparative parallels of the language) comes from Akkadian. Akkadian was known in ancient Egypt in what would have been the Mosaic era. Akkadian was kind of like English is today—it was the language of international correspondence. So Egyptians are going to naturally be exposed to it. Moses (given the biblical description of his context) would have had a pretty good education, so this is something that wouldn't have been new to him. It wouldn't have been something that he couldn't have known. It wouldn't have been inaccessible to him. So it's conceivable that the writer of the tabernacle/temple texts (Moses, whoever, and later on when you get into temple material), they certainly could have used the term. It would have been part of their vocabulary. So the issue isn't something like, a writer can only be using this vocabulary if he's like living in or around Babylonians or Mesopotamians or Akkadians or whatever. The issue is whether this word is in their vocabulary (and it obviously is because they use it), and the history of the word. We know that it is in their vocabulary, but where does it come from? In this case, it comes from Akkadian.

5:00

The question is good because it calls for a little more clarification of that. So whoever wrote this material, Akkadian (at least this term) had become part of the Hebrew vocabulary at the time. I should also mention in regard to this... If you're following what I just said, that doesn't require the events of the Exodus or the setting of the tabernacle or the setting of the temple to be a Babylonian one. In other words, it doesn't rule out the historical *contacts* and the *contexts* of these events that the Bible is describing. The discussion is just about the term. Where does the term come from? Some scholars would... You'll find this particularly in older scholarship. You won't find it so much now. But some will take a look at the Ark and the cherubim on the Ark and they'll compare that to Egyptian palanquins. What's a palanquin? Good Scrabble word here! A palanquin is a box. This is a podcast (an audio thing) so it doesn't really translate well to what we're doing here, but if you just Google "palanquin" you're going to find examples. A lot of them look like the Ark, except for the lid and the cherubim on top of it. It's a box. Inside the box you could have idols and statues and what-not. They were either dragged around or carried around on carts or wagons or by people in different ceremonies in Egypt.

Because the Exodus story has this Egyptian context, a lot of people have thought that one of these palanquins was probably the template for the Ark. Well, there's a bit of guesswork in there. Maybe in terms of design (architecturally, if I can use

that term here) that might have some validity. But that doesn't mean, for instance, that some palanquins who have the images of Isis and Nephthys on them (both winged goddesses), that that's where Moses is getting the inspiration for the cherubim. Isis and Nephthys were not throne guardians. They're not creaturely. The cherubim are not described as feminine, for instance. In fact, the term (again) is an Akkadian one, not an Egyptian one. So you can't press the point of comparison too much, but in terms of the visual—a box—well, okay, maybe this is what they were thinking of or Moses had seen one of these before, or something like it. You get the box idea from there... maybe. Maybe you can draw some parallels there, but not the term.

The other thing is... Again, you can't press a lot of this too far, because if you extend this to the tabernacle, where you have a tent dwelling, that's very Semitic—this idea of the deity sort of living in a tented structure (thinking of sort of a patriarchal analogy of Yahweh being sort of the patriarch of the divine council sort of thing—you get that flavoring). So what you actually see in the Hebrew Bible is kind of a mixture. You have cultural points of contact: Egyptian (maybe the palanquins or the tented structure of the tabernacle), and then you have linguistic points of contact—here you have an Akkadian term that winds up being the term of choice for this particular feature of the Ark of the Covenant.

So there's all sorts of cultural and linguistic contacts (points of contact) going on here. You never just have one particular context, especially if this part of Israel's history is your setting. So this was a good question, again, just to talk about some of these other things. Don't be misled into thinking that there's this one point of contact here and that the narrative of the story has to be read against that one point of contact—especially if it's language-related. We don't know when *keruv* would have entered the Hebrew language (the Hebrew lexicon, as it were). We just know that it did and we know where the term comes from.

TS: All right. Bob has a question:

Paul says in Romans 1:26: "For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature"... Is Paul thinking "contrary to nature" only in terms of same-sex relations, as unquestionably described pertaining to men in the next verse? Or is this a reference to Genesis 6:2? In the Genesis account, it doesn't say the sons of God forced themselves on the daughters of men. Could the daughters of men have willingly exchanged "natural relations" (human male/female relations) for those that are contrary to nature (human/divine relations) and THIS is what Paul is referring to?

10:00

MH: The timing of this is really interesting. I was just talking to David Burnett a couple of days ago (texting, actually). He has a friend who is doing work in this area. I can't recall if the guy is doing a thesis on Romans 1 or if it was a paper or something like that, but Burnett gave me the gist of this fellow's arguments. So

we're trying to get ahold of this paper that he did, because I told Dave I was really interested in it. But his argument is that both Paul and Peter link false teaching and idolatry to the Genesis 6 and Sodom events, in that order. Now this is sort of an old trajectory when it comes to 2 Peter 2. In fact, it's pretty easy to see there. If you go to 2 Peter 2:4-6, we read:

⁴For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ⁵if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ⁶if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction...

So you get a reference there to the angels that sinned, and there is no other Old Testament story for that. It's "angels" (plural) that sinned, so it's not like some Lucifer event or whatever. It's very clear that this is a reference to Genesis 6, and then on the heels of that you get the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah. And, of course, this is part of Peter's diatribe against false teachers. So it's very easy to see that Peter thinks of those events in that order as he's going off on the false teachers that he's addressing.

The question is, does Paul do that, too? And this fellow is arguing (just as the questioner asks or presumes) that Paul *does* do the same thing in Romans 1. You have the women exchanging natural relations and then you have the men with the homosexual unnatural relations there. So if the one is possibly a reference to Sodom, then it would make sense to view the previous one (the women) as a reference to Genesis 6, or at least striking those two points of analogy.

I'll say right now that I'm going to sort of suspend judgment on this. I haven't really seen a good case yet made for this, but I'll be honest and say this hasn't received a whole lot of attention. I'm really interested in this guy's thesis or whatever it is. I'll just say to Bob (our questioner): I'm not sure. I think it's possible. Let's just go there—I think it's possible. I'm not persuaded yet, but that might change after I have a read of this, and hopefully that will be soon. This was a very recent conversation between David and myself, so he's trying to get me access to his friend's work. We'll see if that happens.

TS: All right. Jeff in Lancaster, UK, asked:

I would appreciate if Dr. Heiser could look at 1 Corinthians 8:4-6. How would he respond to Paul's teaching here that there's no God but one, and the other gods (whether in heaven or earth) are called "so-called" gods?

MH: I think this is a really good case where the English translation (and in this case, even the typesetting) biases readers. In a lot of translations, you'll go to 1 Corinthians 8 and you'll have "gods" or "many lords" (in scare quotes). That sort of predisposes the reader into thinking this is sort of a fairy-tale kind of thing that Paul is now going to deny and go after. I actually address this in *Unseen Realm*, so I don't know if the questioner has a copy. My response is basically that I'm going to read part of what I put in *Unseen Realm* in relation to 1 Corinthians 8. I pointed out that in the discussion in 1 Corinthians 8:1-6, Paul does acknowledge that there are other gods (*theoi*). If you go to 1 Corinthians 8, he says:

Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up...

⁴Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence"...

15:00 Well, Paul is right! The idol itself isn't alive. We know that there's no God but one. Well, that's a statement of the uniqueness of Yahweh, the God of Israel. We know that's true, as well. But then Paul follows that by saying:

⁵For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

So in the space of three verses there, he affirms that indeed there are many gods (*theoi*) and many lords (*kryioi*). Paul affirms that they're real, they exist. But for us, there's one God—the Father. And of course, there's one Lord—Jesus Christ. But then he has this language about so-called gods in heaven or on earth, and we're a little bit biased when it says "so-called." The term there is just the normal word *lego*, which means "to say" or "to call, to speak," that sort of thing. So the reference is really, "There are many gods in heaven and on earth that people name as their gods." That's all its saying. So to translate it "so-called," as though you're supposed to doubt it now, is really an injustice to a very common, simple term in the Greek New Testament (*lego*). You should really look at verse 5 and say, "For although there are many gods in heaven and on earth that are called gods, and indeed there are many gods and lords, yet for us there is one." The idea is that there are many other rivals to Yahweh that people worship and assume are better than the God of Israel, or sort of the "real one up there" or any number of ways that an idolatrous person or population would have looked at their gods. This is all Paul is saying. "There are lots of other deities that people assign worth to, that they believe are true gods in the sense that this is the one

that deserves our worship" and so on. Paul says, "That's all true, but for us there's one, and there's one Lord," so on and so forth.

So right away we're biased in the translation by the scare quotes. We're biased by translating *lego* as "so-called" instead of just saying "called." You add the little word "so" in front of it and it biases the reader. So I have a bone to pick with the way the term is translated, but going back to what I said in *Unseen Realm* [page 328], Paul acknowledges:

...that there were other gods and other lords among people who did not belong to Yahweh and Jesus.

We know this because this is the state of the affairs that the nations were under. This is the Deuteronomy 32:8-9 world view. If the questioner or people listening to the podcast don't have any idea what I'm talking about here now, go to nakedbiblepodcast.com and go to "Start Here" and watch the video on the Divine Council Worldview (the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview) because I can't take the time in the podcast to do that.

So assuming that you know what I'm talking about here, I wrote in *Unseen Realm*:

Taking Paul's comments in both 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 together (the subject matter is the same)...

This is important. So we have here in 1 Corinthians 8 this reference to other gods and other lords and the food sacrificed to idols. So people read this and they're biased by the scare quotes. They're biased by rendering *lego* "so-called" instead of just "called" or "named." And they think Paul didn't think the gods were real. Well, you've got a real problem with that when you get to 1 Corinthians 10, because he discusses the same subject matter, and there it's quite a different story. So for Paul, when you get to 1 Corinthians 10, this is when he's talking about not eating the meat because then you'd be in fellowship with demons. And in 1 Corinthians 8, he more or less says, "Who cares if you eat the meat because we know idols aren't real deities. This block of wood and stone isn't a real deity. It's not alive. It's just a piece of wood or a piece of stone, so who gives a rip? Do what's right in your own conscience and you're okay" (1 Corinthians 8:7). But then he changes his tune in chapter 10 when he says, "Don't eat because then you're going to be in fellowship with demons" (1 Corinthians 10:21-22).

Is Paul contradicting himself? No! Because in 1 Corinthians 8 he's talking about the idol. It's not real; it's not alive. "There are other gods and other lords, but for us there's one." But in 1 Corinthians 10 he's talking about the entities that are behind the idols that people use to worship those entities. Paul is actually very consistent when he says not to eat the meat because you don't want to be in

20:00

fellowship with demons. So if you're going to deny the entities are real in 1 Corinthians 8, then you have to deny that the *daimonion* (the demons) in 1 Corinthians 10 are real. And Paul obviously believed demons were real. You can't deny the language in one to affirm the language in another. It's totally contradictory. The real kicker here is that in 1 Corinthians 10 (when Paul talks about the demons that are really behind these objects—people are just using object to worship these deities), again, Paul acknowledges even in chapter 8 that there are many gods and many lords. They're using these objects to worship them. When he talks about those deities and he calls them "demons" in 1 Corinthians 10:21-22, where does he get that? He gets it from Deuteronomy 32. He's quoting, taking the language from the Septuagint translation of Deuteronomy 32:17, which says (talking about Israel—Paul is actually tracking on Deuteronomy 32 through a big section of chapter 10):

The Israelites sacrificed to demons that were not God [MH: *eloha*—it's a singular word... "god"]. They sacrificed to demons [*shedim*] that were not God, to gods [*elohim*] they had never known.

And that was a problem for Paul. And Paul doesn't want believers in Corinth to fall into this trap. "So don't sacrifice to the *diamonion*. Don't eat this meat." The way you reconcile these two things is that apparently (if you go to 1 Corinthians 10)... Paul says, "don't do this," but then he says, "okay, if it's sold in the marketplace, go ahead." So the issue for Paul must have been doing something that made you sort of part of the ritual; made you sort of part of the sacrifice, made you a participant in the event of the sacrifice. That, to him, was where the line needed to be drawn. Because "then you'll be just like the Israelites, sacrificing to the *diamonion*, to the *shedim*" (if we want to use the Hebrew term). And that's an abomination. These were gods that the Israelites didn't know. They weren't for the Israelites. They were assigned to the other nations (again, the Deuteronomy 32:8-9 Worldview—just a few verses earlier before verse 17).

So Paul isn't contradicting himself, and he's not contradicting the Old Testament. He's actually trying to tiptoe through this issue for the Corinthians and say, "The issue isn't the meat. It's not the act of eating or the meat itself. The issue is not to do anything that makes you a participant with these entities" that Paul considered real because the Israelites considered them real. The biblical writers considered them real. "These other *elohim*...don't do that. That is a violation. That was Israel's downfall, and we don't want this to happen to believers now who are following Christ. Don't do this." So you can go to *Unseen Realm* to get the whole picture there. I gave a number of works in footnotes that show how Paul tracks through Deuteronomy 32 in a larger section of 1 Corinthians 10, because he's comparing the believing community there in Corinth that he's writing to (the Christians, the Church there) to the Israelites. "We don't want to happen to you what happened to them," and he gets to this whole thing about the demons and

he says, "Boy, you've just gotta avoid this. You must avoid this because they are real.

**...as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"— yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.
[1 Corinthians 8:6]**

Again, Paul is actually really consistent in the way he approaches this, but when you get to certain translations of 1 Corinthians 8 and then you get to chapter 10, you think this guy can't make up his mind. It's because you've been biased to think a particular way in chapter 8 that doesn't work real well when you get to chapter 10.

TS: Our next question is actually from two different listeners. They're tracking on the same thing. They have a question about Melchizedek. Shawn in West Virginia asks:

Can you explain what views and beliefs early Christians or earlier Jews had about Melchizedek? Who was he? What was the significance of his relationship with Abraham and with Christ? Is there an understanding or perspective that those early believers had that gets missed with us?

Jessica echoes the same stuff. She wants to know:

25:00

Are there some biblical traditions about Melchizedek? I assume he's a divine being, since it says, "having no beginning and no end," but I know there's special significance since Jesus is referred to as a priest after him and not after the Levites. Or is Paul, perhaps, just describing him as another embodiment of Yahweh like the Angel of the Lord?

MH: Let me just make one quick note here. The questioner sort of assumes that Paul wrote Hebrews. He may have—nobody knows who wrote Hebrews. But outside of Hebrews you don't have Melchizedek referred to in the New Testament. All the references are in Hebrews 5, 6, and 7. Most of them are in 7. But it doesn't really matter for the sake of the question.

This whole subject is a mess! (laughs) The short answer to "what did ancient Jews think about Melchizedek" is: Lots of things! There is no one view; there are several views, and they are mutually contradictory at many points. The whole Melchizedek thing is a really difficult topic because there are so many ambiguities in both Testaments about who this guy was and why he's even mentioned. I would say the topic deserves... I was going to say one episode, but I actually think Melchizedek deserves to be two episodes on the podcast—one Old Testament (basically Genesis 14 and Psalm 110) and the next one a follow-up

on Second Temple stuff in the New Testament. So we should do that. We should devote a two-part miniseries to Melchizedek. But I'll make a few comments here.

Trey, you said at the beginning that sometimes the answers generate more questions... well, that's what we've got going on here! (laughing) Melchizedek is sort of the poster-child for "this is really messy in Scripture" (in terms of our understanding and what we're able to discern and feel confident about). There's isn't a whole lot here.

The difficulties can be summarized this way... I'll just list a few:

1. We have an Old Testament description (Genesis 14) which has several clear attachments to a Canaanite context—that is, an extrabiblical or non-Israelite context. Because that's the case, how we think about Melchizedek if we're just in Genesis 14 is going to be different than the way we think about Melchizedek even in Psalm 110, and especially in the New Testament. So we've got a bit of a disconnect there.
2. If you go to Psalm 110, that has some notorious textual problems. Psalm 110 is probably on a short list of passages that have the most text-critical problems in the Hebrew Bible. You've got Psalm 68, which has a few doozies. You've got Psalm 22 with a few doozies. And you go to Psalm 110... it's going to be in the short list of passages that have some really gnarly things going on that matter for interpretation. Some of the key phrases associated with Melchizedek are where some of these problems are.
3. You've got several Melchizedek traditions in Second Temple Judaism (Intertestamental Judaism). At points, they do not agree with each other.
4. There are things you read about in Hebrews 7, like this "without beginning or end" kind of thing, that you just won't find in the Old Testament and you won't even find them in other Second Temple Jewish texts. So how are we supposed to take this?
5. Just sort of a general summation: You've got disagreements between all four of those preceding items I just listed. There is no consistent picture. So that has created this maelstrom of "what do we do with Melchizedek?" It's a really difficult, thorny issue.

I'm going to give you some examples here. I don't want to just create a list and then not give you specifics. A few examples... Let's start with the name Melchizedek. You may think, "Surely that's simple! It means "king of righteousness." Well, if you're paying attention to Hebrew morphology (the spelling of the name), it shouldn't mean that. (laughs) The reason is (if you've had Hebrew you'll understand this, so for those in the audience who've had)... It

30:00

breaks down to *malki sedeq*. Now you'd think you have a simple construct chain there: noun one, noun two; X of Y. But you don't—because of the "ee" ending (the "y" ending). By rule of Hebrew grammar, you are not supposed to have an attached suffix between two nouns in the construct state, but that's what you've got here! So you can't really translate it "king of righteousness." It would be better to say "my king is righteous." They're kind of the same idea, but it's not really the same idea. "King of righteousness" and "my king is righteous." Those are two related but kind of different concepts.

So even the name is controversial. In fact, if you want to be really literal, you could translate it (and many scholars do), "My king is Sedeq." That's the second noun there, that some would translate "righteous" or "righteousness." Why would scholars do something goofy like that? Why not just go with "my king is righteous?" Yes, they can be grammar nerds and say we can't say "king of righteousness" but let's just go with "my king is righteous." What's this thing with "my king is Sedeq?" That's just odd. Well, there's actually a Canaanite deity named Sedeq, and since this is pre-Israelite (this is the era before Jerusalem—"king of Salem"—before David's conquest of it), we're not in the land. We don't have the Promised Land thing yet. This is Abraham in Genesis 14. This is Canaanite turf. So Melchizedek could have been named after this non-Israelite deity. "I'm Melchizedek. My king is Sedeq, this pagan deity." Well, then why is Abraham being blessed by him? Who is Sedeq? Is this another name for Yahweh? Are Yahweh and Sedeq maybe the same in Israelite thinking? Just the *name* gets you into all these areas that are really gnarly. They're not easy.

Second example: If the Messianic priesthood is from Melchizedek (Psalm 110 stuff now), why do we have an Aaronic priesthood? Other than Psalm 110, where does this idea even come from? In other words, where did the Psalmist get it? Where does the guy who's writing Psalm 110 even get this idea, because we don't have a priesthood of Melchizedek in the Old Testament (in the Torah), we have the Aaronic (the priesthood of Aaron) in the Torah. A sub-issue is, where is the link to the line of Abraham in Genesis 14? You just get all sorts of these complications when it comes to this person. DDD, for example (Dictionary of Deities and Demons) says this about Psalm 110 (at least some of the Psalm 110 material):

[This divine figure in Psalm 110's] priesthood is defined as, "in or after the manner of Melchizedek." The exact meaning of this phrase is hard to establish. [MH: That's a nice understatement from DDD!] It may mean "in the line of Melchizedek," in other words "inheriting the priesthood of Melchizedek." It could mean "like Melchizedek," or "on account of Melchizedek," as well. Probably, the formula shows that the kings of Israel beginning with David inherited the tradition of the priest-king or pre-Israelite Jerusalem. This connection between kingship and priesthood apparently did not last very long, since no king of Judah was ever

called "priest" and allusions to priestly conduct are limited to David and Solomon. (2 Samuel 6:14-18, 2 Samuel 24:17, 1 Kings 8:14, 8:56)

So you get a few references to David and Solomon doing priestly kinds of things, but you don't have that with anybody else. And if, beginning with David, you have this inheritance of this other priestly line, why did it go away? Was there something wrong with it? And again—back to why do we have an Aaronic priesthood? Why in Israelite history is there no tradition after Solomon, and there's really not a tradition even for David and Solomon that they were viewed as king-priests... Why is that? There just seems to be some disconnect going on here.

35:00 Third example: Hebrews 7. Elements of that (as I mentioned) can't be found in Genesis 14 or Psalm 110 or even Second Temple Judaism. You get a portrayal of Melchizedek in Philo, you get Josephus talking about him, and you get a text that's especially interesting called *11Q Melchizedek*. This is one of the Dead Sea Scrolls—a non-biblical scroll. That one is really interesting because in that text (it's also called 11Q-13 in the numbering system), Melchizedek is considered to be the lord of the council of Psalm 82. Anybody who knows the material we do on the podcast (Psalm 82 and the divine council stuff) is going to know what Psalm 82 is about. Well, *11Q Melchizedek* has Melchizedek being the one who presides over the council. That, in and of itself, is just kind of crazy, kind of bizarre. I'll read DDD again because it comments on this text, too:

In the Qumran text, Melchizedek is mentioned twice: in 1QAP (Genesis 22) [MH: that's the *Genesis Apocryphon*, which is sort of a version of Genesis 14 events] and also in *11Q Melchizedek*, which consists of thirteen fragments. In that text, Melchizedek takes a central role. The many gaps (the *lacunae*) in the text make a conclusive interpretation virtually impossible. The text has the form of an eschatological midrash [MH: in other words, sort of an eschatological riff on Psalm 82] in which the liberation prophesied in Isaiah 61 is described in terms of the restoration of property during the Year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25, and the deliverer is Melchizedek, who is the *elohim* of Psalm 82.

So you've got *11Q Melchizedek* drawing stuff from Isaiah 61, which Jesus quotes (remember, when he's at the synagogue: "this day this has been fulfilled" and "setting the captives free" and all that stuff?). *11Q Melchizedek* quotes that passage, Leviticus 25, and Psalm 82, and puts Melchizedek right in the middle of that. So that raises the question: Is Melchizedek... To some Jews, is he the lord of the council? How does that jive with Genesis 14? Did the Jew who wrote *11Q Melchizedek*... Didn't he read Genesis 14? I mean, how do you get there? Again, on one hand, *11Q Melchizedek* shows us Jews could think, though, in terms of a God-king who was also a priest. That sounds specifically like Jesus, doesn't it? But this is a secular (a non-biblical—not part of the bible) text, but it's a text among the Dead Sea Scrolls that was interpreting certain passages in the

Old Testament in ways that the New Testament interpreted certain Old Testament passages, thinking about Jesus. So *11Q Melchizedek* has drawn a lot of attention. But you don't have a specific alignment between it and like Hebrews 7. You just don't. You have a few points of contact, maybe—touch points—but they don't really interact with each other. Obviously, they can't because Hebrews 7 was written much later, but you get similar kinds of flavoring to it.

I could go on and on. One more last phrase here... this whole idea of "without beginning or end." What do we do with that? Well, in other Greek literature, there are the same words there—the same vocabulary. Those terms do get used of divine beings in other Greek texts. So that creates, again, the question of whether Melchizedek is to be viewed as divine here, as a divine (non-human) being, or at least more than human. Is this a clue? And if it is, how is that consistent with Genesis 14 and Psalm 110? Maybe (this is just one proposal... we're just throwing stuff out here) Melchizedek and the son of God (Jesus), maybe there's a type/antitype thing going on here. Maybe the point of Hebrews 7 isn't to do exegesis in Genesis 14 or in Psalm 110. Maybe all he's trying to do is strike analogies. And maybe he's thinking those two things (the son of God—Jesus—and Melchizedek) are analogical because of Jewish traditions that we see in *11Q Melchizedek* where you have a divine, kingly, priestly sort of figure there. In other words, that whole set of ideas was part of at least some Jewish thinking between the Testaments, and so maybe the writer of Hebrews understood that or had been exposed to that and says, "Aha! I've got the real answer here, and the real answer is an analogous relationship between Melchizedek and Jesus." And to really throw a wrench into this, some would say he's not really doing the analogy between Melchizedek in the Old Testament and Jesus, he's doing the analogy between Jesus and *11Q Melchizedek* itself, which would really throw a curve ball into things. So again—this is an extremely complicated subject that we will return to and do two episodes on it. There's just so much here that you can't really do it justice or really resolve anything in a Q&A.

40:00

TS: My mind is blown. (laughter)

MH: This is why there's been more than one dissertation on Melchizedek.

TS: We're going to hold you to that two episodes.

MH: It'll take two.

TS: All right... looking forward to *that!* Our next question is from Peter:

What do you make of Psalm 45:6, where the Psalmist addresses the king as *elohim*? Is this a sign that Israel's king (pre-resurrection and pre-glorification) was already considered part of the divine council? Of course,

Hebrews 1 makes much of this verse in applying it to Christ. I'm curious how it might be understood in light of the Divine Council Worldview.

MH: Yeah, in real general terms I would say that the trajectory that Peter mentions in the question about the king... it's sort of an already-but-not-yet being considered part of the divine council. I would say that's possible because believers are talked about in that way, as well. It's just that you get some possible sort of explicit notation of it here in Psalm 45.

I want to take this in a different but related direction, as well. On my website for the book (moreunseenrealm.com)... If people go up to that and click on the tab for chapter 4, I actually talk about this passage on that website. I want to read a little bit of what's on the website. This is going to be a little tough to translate to people in audio form, so I would recommend if you are listening to this and you can pull out a Bible and be looking at Psalm 45 here, it might help because it's going to be a little hard to follow, perhaps. But you can always go up and read this later. I'm just going to read part of that page here.

So the question presumes that the Psalmist's statement (this is typically the way it's translated), "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever" must refer to the Israelite king and refer to the Israelite king in that way. In other words, it's [supposedly] addressing the Israelite king and actually saying, "Your throne O GOD is forever and ever." So that's the presumption behind the question.

Now some will take that presumption and then argue that *elohim* refers to humans, and then they try to get the gods out of Psalm 82 and lots of other passages. Of course, the problem with that is even if it's true that the Psalmist is referring to the king as *elohim*, it's the king. It's not the Israelite judges, and it's not every human. So let's say that it's an illogical argument to use this verse against there being gods (divine beings) in the divine council in Psalm 82. Of course, then you also have the problem of Psalm 89 (where the council is in heaven), etc. This doesn't help demythologize Psalm 82, even though some people try to. Basically, their arguments are only effective for people who are listening to them and not thinking. (laughs). It's just a bad argument. Where I'm going to take this here (and again, go to moreunseenrealm.com)... There are those who say, "That's really not the way Psalm 45:6 should be translated." Goldengay... I'll just start reading here:

Although it seems little-known, the original orientation of *elohim* in Psalm 45:6-7 could coherently be God himself. This is possible, depending on how one takes these stanzas in the Psalm.

They're also called "cola" (the plural of "colons"). That's scholar-speak for "stanzas." I use the word "stanza" because I think more people can identify with "poetic stanza" or "poetic line."

45:00

So depending on how you take the stanzas—how you divide them up—and what belongs with what, you actually come out in a different place, where the language is referring to God himself and not the king. That's possible. Goldengay (who is an evangelical Old Testament scholar who has written a lot of stuff)... In his multi-volume commentary on Psalms, he says of this Psalm at this point... He notes the structure of the Psalm's statement and he actually renders verse 5 and the first part of verse 6 this way:

5 Your arrows are sharpened—peoples are beneath your feet—
they fall in the heart of the king's enemies;
6a the throne, God's, is yours forever and ever.

So speaking to the king, but speaking about God himself—not calling the king "God." That is a perfectly legitimate translation of Psalm 45:5-6a. Goldengay then offers some comment for his translation here. He says:

As the king acts in the pursuit of truthfulness and faithfulness, expecting to see God doing marvels, then opponents will fall before him. On any reading the order of the cola is jerky; [Many English versions] reverse some of the phrases to make the text read more smoothly. [MH: aha! (laughs)] Verse 5 is yet another pair of four-stress cola [MH: What he means by that is you have a poetic line there's an accenting system that the Masoretes apply throughout the Hebrew Bible (not just poetry). The accenting system for poetry helps divide up the cola/stanzas. They're showing this is how they would group things here, by virtue of this accenting system.], with the second clause in v. 5a forming a parenthesis; the "they" is the arrows. The declaration in v. 6a then closes off these comments [about] the king's power. His victories reflect the fact that he sits on God's throne (e.g., 1 Chron. 29:23) ["Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king in place of David, his father"], ruling Israel on God's behalf, and destined to rule the world on God's behalf (cf. Ps. 2). That in itself would make the king's throne last forever. The fact that God made a lasting commitment to the Davidic king's throne would also have that implication.

See what he's saying here? He's saying that the translation that he offers makes sense, both in terms of the Masoretic mark-up and theologically. Here's the Goldengay translation again:

5 Your arrows are sharpened—peoples are beneath your feet—
they fall in the heart of the king's enemies;
6a the throne, God's, is yours forever and ever.

Again, what Goldengay would say is that this is a reference to the promise to David. He's not calling the king "God," he's saying the king sits on God's throne. If you take it that way, then the question is really both answered and kind of done

away with. But what prompts the question, of course, is typically the way English Bibles (many of them)... This is Goldengay's language, this isn't mine. English translations will rearrange some things to make it sound smoother, and you come out with "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever," and that generates this question of why the king is being called "God." The answer is that the Hebrew text might not have meant that at all, and it probably didn't. I'm with Goldengay on this. I think what he's saying makes a lot of sense.

I needed to read through that, rather than just say, "That's just not the way it's translated and I like this other one." There's a really good reason behind it to link it to the Davidic covenant and also to take the stanzas for what they are within the Masoretic tradition of accenting and grouping them. You don't have the king called "God" in that case.

TS: All right. Our last question is from David in the UK. He wants to know:

If anything unclean gets destroyed in sacred space, how come Satan is safe in God's presence in Job?

50:00

MH: I'm not quite sure where the question is coming from because I don't really know of anything unclean getting destroyed in sacred space. Maybe the questioner is thinking of the Nadab and Abihu episode in Leviticus 10 (the "strange fire" kind of thing). Because if something was defiled (made impure) and was therefore ineligible for sacred space, the typical procedure in Leviticus wasn't that God just sends a lightning bolt down and destroys it or destroys the person. There was a procedure to go through decontamination. So I'm not quite sure about the first part of the question: "if anything unclean gets destroyed in sacred space." I'm not quite sure what he's talking about there. If it is Leviticus 10 (Nadab and Abihu), that has a context, so I'd recommend going back to the Leviticus series and looking for the episode on Leviticus 10 and listening to that.

But let's just go to the second part of the question. How come Satan is safe in God's presence in Job? I think a lot of listeners could probably anticipate what I'm going to say here. The *satan* in Job 1 and 2 is not the devil. We don't have a problem here with the devil (Satan) being safe in God's presence in Job 1 and 2 because that isn't the devil. For a video on this and the results of text searching on this, go up to drms.com and if you type "Satan Job" in the search engine there, you're going to find a couple posts that relate to this issue. Just to summarize what you'll see there for the sake of listeners, the reason I say that this isn't the devil in Job 1 and 2 is because in every instance in Job and also in Zechariah 3, the word *satan* is prefixed by the Hebrew definite article. That's the word "the." By rule of Hebrew grammar (and in the video you'll see me flip out to a Hebrew grammar so that you know Mike's not just making this up—it's a Hebrew reference grammar and anybody that's gone past first year in Hebrew knows this)... Hebrew—like English—does not prefix the word "the," does not prefix a definite article to proper, personal names. It never happens. So the

English example is that I'm not "the Mike." Trey is not "the Trey." We're just Mike and Trey. It sounds idiotic because this is the way English grammar works. English does not use a definite article before a proper, personal name. Hebrew is exactly the same. So this is a rule of Hebrew grammar. What that means is that *satan* in Job 1 & 2 is not a proper, personal name. It's not capital "S" Satan, even though English texts translate it that way. They present the term that way. And frankly, let's just be honest, they do that because it would freak people out to not do it. People are so used to reading it in older translations like the King James or whatever. They're so used to hearing about the devil (capital "S" Satan) in Job 1 and 2, that if you don't represent it that way, nobody is going to buy your English translation and they'll think you're a heretic. It's just a concession. Now in the ESV (and that's not the only one)... If you go to Job 1:6 in the ESV (the first time you have the term mentioned), there will be a footnote. I'll read you the footnote:

Hebrew *the Accuser or the Adversary*; so throughout chapters 1-2

So it ought to be translated, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and the accuser also came among them." In other words, it strips out the proper, personal name. It's a title. It's an office. It's a person, a being, an entity in the divine council that gets a little uppity—and we know the rest of the story about the conflict between God and *ha satan* (the satan, the adversary). But this is not the devil of Genesis 3 (Garden of Eden) or the devil of the New Testament. And so the question has to be answered that way. Satan isn't "safe" in God's presence in Job because it's not capital "S" Satan—the devil. Now if you have *Unseen Realm*, I'd recommend that you read the part of the book where I discuss Luke 10:18 ("I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven"). I think that is probably more pertinent to the kinds of things you might be wondering about, by virtue of this question. But as far as Job 1 and 2 goes, this isn't the devil and so there's no issue of the devil being safe in God's presence.

55:00

TS: All right, Mike... just like that! That's all the questions we have for this episode. I guess, Mike, next week we're going to be really seeing the conference interviews that we have over the course of Thanksgiving week (for those that are here in America). I guess everybody have a good Turkey Day. (laughter)

MH: We're planning on it, so Lord willing!

TS: Be prepared to be peppered with a bunch of interviews from the conferences. So eat some turkey and listen to some podcasts.

MH: Don't play any music while you eat. Play the podcast while you eat!

TS: Again, I guess I need to do my yearly challenge, and that's to expose somebody to the content. Thanksgiving is a good time, while you're talking to

family members and friends that you haven't seen in a while. So maybe you can kind of slip in the Divine Council Worldview somewhere...

MH: Skip the politics and do the divine council!

TS: That's exactly right—skip the politics and just get straight to Gettin' Nekked. Ask them if they're interested. (laughter)

MH: I was thinking of something more edifying than that, but go ahead...

TS: You should know better from me.

MH: I'm learning.

TS: But anyway, it's a good conversation starter. So I guess, Mike, with that we thank you for answering our questions and look forward to all of the interviews and the conference. Everybody in America have a good Turkey Day, and I guess with that—Thanks for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.