

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 143

Ezekiel 28

January 28, 2017

Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

The focus in this episode is Ezek 28:1-19. As readers of my book, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* know, this is a controversial passage. All scholars agree that this is an oracle and lament against a human prince of Tyre. The disagreement stems from vv. 11-19, but 1-19 is peripherally affected. The debate is over just who the prince of Tyre in vv. 11-19 is being compared to — i.e., what is the point of analogy? Many say that the prince of Tyre is being compared to Adam in Eden. This would mean that it is Adam who is being referred to as a “guardian cherub” (v. 14) who walked in the midst of the stone of fire (a reference to either divine council members or the divine council locale). Dr. Heiser shares the view of other scholars who say that the prince of Tyre is being compared to a divine rebel — and that this passage is related to another one (Isaiah 14) that compares a human ruler (king of Babylon) to a divine rebel. Further, he argues that these two passages are related to Genesis 3, the OT’s own story of a primeval divine rebellion. This means that the anointed cherub is a divine being, a rebellious member of the divine council (stones of fire) – not Adam. This episode explores why the debate exists and adds some details in defense of Dr. Heiser’s position.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 143: Ezekiel chapter 28. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you?

MH: Pretty good, pretty good. A lot of people have been waiting for this one, so... (laughs) here we are, finally!

TS: Long-time coming! I'm excited about this one.

MH: Yeah, Ezekiel 28. I'm going to read the whole chapter. We might as well just jump in here. There's a lot to cover. I'll just warn people ahead of time that some of this is going to be pretty technical, but it really can't be avoided. The transcript will help. I've already given Brenda transliterations for the Hebrew that I'm going to be saying in the episode, so if you can't follow aurally completely, get the transcript and you'll be okay.

So Ezekiel 28 is, as I mentioned, the prophecy against the prince of Tyre. In the last episode, we had two chapters about Tyre, and here Ezekiel zeroes in on the prince. It's a pretty familiar passage for anybody who's read *Unseen Realm* because I do spend a good bit of time here. For our purposes, we're really going to focus on the first 19 verses.

This is part of the oracles against the nations, so in verses 1-10 you have the oracle about the demise of the prince of Tyre. And then in verses 11-19, there's a lament over the king of Tyre. Those are the first 19 verses. There's a little bit more in the chapter. There's a prophecy against Sidon and a little hint about Israel's regathering. Of course, just a few chapters ago, Jerusalem has been destroyed (or at least that's what Ezekiel tells the captives, but we have to wait until chapter 33 to actually get the fugitive that tells them the news that it really happened and it's destroyed). But you have a hint here at the end of the chapter about Israel's regathering in contrast to what's going on in Tyre and Sidon. We're going to focus on the first 19 verses, but let's just jump in and read the chapter and then we'll get to commenting on those 19 verses because, honestly, that's what really draws people to this chapter. So reading from the ESV:

The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord God:

**“Because your heart is proud,
and you have said, ‘I am a god,
I sit in the seat of the gods,
in the heart of the seas,’
yet you are but a man, and no god,
though you make your heart like the heart of a god—
³you are indeed wiser than Daniel;
no secret is hidden from you;**

We should just stop there. What you have here, "I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, the heart of the seas..." Those who have read *Unseen Realm* know that these are phrases drawn right out of Canaanite Ugaritic material for the divine council. So that situates us pretty clearly in supernatural divine territory as far as the analogy. Everybody knows that this chapter is about the prince of Tyre—a human being. But the key question is going to be, "What is he being

analogized to or with?" And I'm going to say it's a tale of a divine rebellion. Other scholars are going to disagree with that, and we'll get to that point. But here you have at the very opening some very clear indications tapping into Ugaritic material. "You are indeed wiser than Daniel." Remember a few chapters ago we had the whole discussion of the Ugaritic Dan'el versus the biblical Daniel and Ezekiel and Daniel are contemporaries, so who is this guy? There's that issue, as well. Are we also tapping into Ugaritic material there? At least in the first two verses, it's pretty clear what the orientation is.

**³ you are indeed wiser than Daniel;
no secret is hidden from you;
⁴ by your wisdom and your understanding
you have made wealth for yourself,
and have gathered gold and silver
into your treasuries;
⁵ by your great wisdom in your trade
you have increased your wealth,
and your heart has become proud in your wealth—**

In the previous episode we talked all about Tyre and her status as sort of the economic hub of the region.

5:00

**⁶ therefore thus says the Lord God:
Because you make your heart
like the heart of a god [MH: you're really puffed up],
⁷ therefore, behold, I will bring foreigners upon you,
the most ruthless of the nations;
and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom
and defile your splendor.
⁸ They shall thrust you down into the pit,
and you shall die the death of the slain
in the heart of the seas.
⁹ Will you still say, 'I am a god,'
in the presence of those who kill you,
though you are but a man, and no god,
in the hands of those who slay you?**

Again, in the last episode there was this reference to being put into the pit—into the Abyss. We get the language here, as well. This netherworld language... I mentioned last time it reminds you of the destiny of the rebel guy in Isaiah 14,

which is clearly a divine being. It's clearly a divine council context. "I will be above the stars of God, I will be like the Most High"—all that stuff in Isaiah 14. Part of that language overlaps very clearly here and even in the preceding chapter. So again, the context here is a divine council context. I'm going to suggest that we have the tale of a divine rebellion in the council and *that* is going to be the point of the analogy to or for or with the prince of Tyre. So verse 10:

**¹⁰You shall die the death of the uncircumcised
by the hand of foreigners;
for I have spoken, declares the Lord God."**

So this is what's going to happen, an oracle against the prince of Tyre. Then in verse 11, it shifts to a lament over the king of Tyre. As we've seen earlier in parts of Ezekiel, "prince" and "king" can be two terms that really speak to the same person. We don't need to sort of retread that ground. But beginning in verse 11:

¹¹Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me: ¹²"Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord God:

**"You were the signet of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.**

**¹³You were in Eden, the garden of God;
every precious stone was your covering,
sardius, topaz, and diamond,
beryl, onyx, and jasper,
sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle;
and crafted in gold were your settings
and your engravings.**

**On the day that you were created
they were prepared.**

**¹⁴You were an anointed guardian cherub.
I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God;
in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.**

**¹⁵You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created,
till unrighteousness was found in you.**

**¹⁶In the abundance of your trade
you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned;
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,
and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub,**

from the midst of the stones of fire.

**¹⁷ Your heart was proud because of your beauty;
you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.**

I cast you to the ground;

**I exposed you before kings,
to feast their eyes on you.**

**¹⁸ By the multitude of your iniquities,
in the unrighteousness of your trade
you profaned your sanctuaries;
so I brought fire out from your midst;
it consumed you,
and I turned you to ashes on the earth
in the sight of all who saw you.**

**¹⁹ All who know you among the peoples
are appalled at you;
you have come to a dreadful end
and shall be no more forever.”**

So early in verses 11-19 we get clear divine council/divine abode... the reference to Eden as "the holy mountain of God." The context is once again very supernaturalistic in terms of the content of the analogy that's being used to describe the king of Tyre. And then the rest of verses 11-19 sounds a whole lot like chapters 26 and 27: what's going to happen or what did happen. We don't need to go over that ground again. Then we hit verse 20:

**²⁰ The word of the LORD came to me: ²¹ “Son of man, set your face toward Sidon,
and prophesy against her ²² and say, Thus says the Lord GOD:**

**“Behold, I am against you, O Sidon,
and I will manifest my glory in your midst.**

**And they shall know that I am the LORD
when I execute judgments in her
and manifest my holiness in her;**

**²³ for I will send pestilence into her,
and blood into her streets;
and the slain shall fall in her midst,
by the sword that is against her on every side.**

Then they will know that I am the LORD.

²⁴ “And for the house of Israel there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to hurt them among all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the Lord God.

10:00

²⁵ “Thus says the Lord God: When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they shall dwell in their own land that I gave to my servant Jacob. ²⁶ And they shall dwell securely in it, and they shall build houses and plant vineyards. They shall dwell securely, when I execute judgments upon all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God.”

That's the end of the chapter. So it closes, again, with this hint that Israel's situation is going to change for the better, as opposed to the nations. Their judgment (when it happens) is going to be pretty permanent. We saw that back in chapters 26 and 27—this contrastive idea a little bit.

But we want to focus on 28:1-19. It's a controversial passage, to put it lightly. It's definitely an oracle and a lament against a human prince of Tyre. Everybody agrees on that. So you'd say, "Why is it controversial?" Well, although no one disputes the point about who it's directed against in Ezekiel's own context, the disagreement is about verses 11-19 mostly, but the whole section of 1-19 is affected. There are two divergent views over who the prince/king in these verses (11-19) is being compared to. In other words, what specifically is the point of analogy?

I'll just outline these two views for you. The first one... Many (and I would say probably a majority of scholars today) say that the prince of Tyre is being compared to Adam in Eden. That would mean that it is Adam who is being referred to as a guardian cherub in verse 14. It was Adam who walked in the midst of the stones of fire, which is a reference to either divine council members or the divine council location. We did a whole episode on the stones of fire when we were going through Enochian material. For instance, if you read 1 Enoch 17-19, you're going to get this kind of language, where it is either stones of fire or members of the divine council. Remember divine beings were thought of as stars, which are stones of fire. They're bright, fiery, shining things in the sky—stones. This is how they're described. Or it describes the place. It's kind of six of one and half dozen of another. It's the divine council either way—it's either the place or the members.

So if you take the first view, you would have Adam as either a member or right there in the divine council... I wouldn't object to that—that Adam was in the divine abode and Eden is the divine abode. This is familiar turf from *Unseen Realm*. And so it's appropriate to talk about Adam in the context of the divine council. We

all get that. But what I'm saying is that the point of the analogy isn't Adam. But that is the dominant view. You'd have to argue, therefore, that Adam was filled with pride, even though Genesis 3 never says that. Adam was filled with pride (Ezekiel 28:17). It was he who was destroyed or exiled from the midst of the stones of fire—from the divine council. That you could argue from Genesis because of what Eden was.

But you can see there are some connections and there are some disconnections. Really, Adam was a guardian cherub? But that's what you have to argue. Or that he was *with* a guardian cherub—there's actually two figures being talked about here in Ezekiel 28 instead of one. You might be thinking already because we just read the passage that it only sounds like there was a cherub. Where's Adam? How does he even enter the picture? Because you can't really call Adam a cherub, but if you have Adam with the cherub... we just read the chapter and where's Adam? We'll get to that. But this is the dominant view.

Part of this view is the gemstones that show up in the chapter. A lot of scholars say these gemstones are reminiscent of the gemstones on the breastplate of the high priest, so Adam is viewed as some sort of high priestly figure in Eden. If that sounds odd, look—this isn't my view. I'm just telling you what the dominant view is. Adam would be some sort of mediator, I guess, between God and the rest of humanity that are going to be birthed from Adam and Eve and so on and so forth. This is how you'd have to think and this is how scholars *do* think about the passage. This is the majority view, that the point of analogy to the prince or the king of Tyre is Adam, not a divine rebel figure.

15:00 Now *my* view—again, if you've read *Unseen Realm* you know—is different. My view (which I'm in the minority with other scholars with me... I'm certainly not the only one, but it's fair to say that this is a minority view) is that the prince of Tyre is being compared to a divine rebel and that this passage is related to Isaiah 14—the *helel ben sachar* or so-called "Lucifer" passage (because that's the way *helel* gets translated in the Vulgate: "Lucifer"... "the shining one" is all it means). I think that this passage (Ezekiel 28) has a very close relationship to Isaiah 14 and Isaiah 14 compares another human ruler (the king of Babylon) to a divine rebel. There's really no way to get away from the divine rebel idea in Isaiah 14. Basically, all scholars are going to agree with that in Isaiah 14. The only disagreement there is which myth of divine rebellion Isaiah 14 is drawing on. Nobody argues that you have a human with the divine rebel or the human is the focus and there's no divine... Nobody argues about Isaiah 14 the way they argue about Ezekiel 18. It's very clear that there's a relationship between the two. They're very similar. Everybody agrees with that. Right away, what should be surfacing in your mind is that if Isaiah 14 is pretty much clearly a divine rebellion thing that is kind of transparent, then why, since it's so similar to Ezekiel 18, can't they accept that for Ezekiel 28? Good question. We'll get to that.

If you take my view (which I'm still sketching out), I would argue that Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 are related. That's the part everybody would agree with, even though they're going to argue about which rebellion story goes with Isaiah 14. Then I further argue that those two passages are, in turn, related to Genesis 3 and that all three passages either utilize the story of divine rebellion or describe a divine rebellion. That means that the anointed cherub in Ezekiel 28 is a divine being. It's not Adam or Adam's not with him. The divine being to whom the prince in Ezekiel 28 is being analogized was a member of the divine council, in my view, who was destroyed or expelled from the divine council—from the midst of the stones of fire. The gemstones, in my view, are not about the high priest. They are descriptors of shiningness—luminescence. They do not correspond with precision to the high priest's breastplate. They just don't. Some of them do, some of them don't. Rather, this kind of description (fiery stones, shining stones, gemstones) are stock descriptions of divine beings in the ancient world. I would argue (and I do in *Unseen Realm*) that the gemstones have a precise correspondence... You can account for all of them in later descriptions of the temple—the new temple in the new Eden in the book of Revelation. The gemstones are about the divine council, they're not about the Israelite high priest. So this is how I flesh this out. The gemstones just give us no reason to think of the high priest. It gives us every reason to think of the divine council context. And if you don't have a human high priestly figure in there, what are you left with? You're left with a divine rebel.

So those are the two views in general. You can imagine we're going to jump into specifics here. I have two objectives as we go through this material. One is that I want everyone listening here to understand why scholars would opt for this "Adam thing"—either have Adam as the cherub, or more properly, have Adam in the scene where you have this anointed cherub. How do they get two figures in that scene—one of them being Adam? And then why do they argue that the prince is being compared to Adam and not the other guy—not the divine rebel guy? Why do they argue this? I hope that is going to be clear by the end of the episode. Then I hope people understand and see why opting for Adam being in the picture at all is unnecessary, and I would say even misguided.

20:00 So let's take the first one. Why would scholars opt for Adam here? Why put him in the scene? Why put him in the chapter? I think there are basically three reasons for this. A lot of scholars don't want to be seen as arguing that Ezekiel 28 is—and this is a key word—is *about* Satan. They don't want to be seen as arguing for that. You say, "Why? What's so terrible about that?" Well, because the word *satan* doesn't appear in Ezekiel 28. That's sort of at the heart of it. Basically, if you go around saying Ezekiel 28 is about Satan, then you look kind of dumb because the word *satan* never shows up in the chapter and other scholars will look at you and laugh and say "Ha! (chuckle, chuckle) You really don't know the text that well, do you?" So scholars don't want to be ridiculed for that. That's one thing.

Second, scholars gravitate toward getting Adam into the picture here because of the gems. We've already mentioned this. They presume that the gems point to the high priest's breastplate (mostly, at least) and they pretend they aren't (or maybe they aren't) troubled by the ones who don't correspond to the high priest. Whatever. They want to argue this high priest angle because then Adam can be argued as a mediator between God and the rest of humanity right there in Eden. That's number two.

The third reason they opt for it (and this one is key) is they *choose* (I'm using that term very deliberately, and you'll see why as we proceed) to follow the Septuagint translation of Ezekiel 28, rather than the Masoretic Text. The Masoretic Text has several difficulties in the Hebrew grammatically that the translator of the Septuagint more or less "solved" for himself (laughs). We're going to see that the "solution" in the Septuagint for the problems actually produces Adam in the scene. If you haven't been exposed to the problems in Ezekiel 28 prior to this, that might sound kind of weird, but it's actually true. People opt for the Septuagint to avoid the grammatical problems in the traditional text. And when they do, Adam all of a sudden appears in the chapter. I'll unpack this as we go.

The first of these items (the thing about not wanting to be seen by my colleagues as saying Ezekiel 28 is about Satan) is a little phony. Every scholar knows Ezekiel 28 isn't *about* Satan. It's about the prince of Tyre. That couldn't be more transparent. But older commentaries (usually written by non-scholars, many of them famous preachers and lots of modern preachers) say that the chapter is about Satan with so much frequency that scholars just don't want to sound like them. They don't want to sound in their own writing like they're endorsing a flawed idea. Now I say that's kind of phony because you can just say what's obvious, like I just did. "That's not about Satan." But that doesn't mean it doesn't *draw* on the story of a divine rebellion similar to Genesis 3 or Genesis 3 itself. You can have both of those things. You don't have to say this chapter is *about* Satan. You can say this chapter *draws on* the events of Genesis 3 to draw the analogy. What's wrong with that? The distinction is clear. So pretending that taking the position I do means that you're saying Ezekiel 28 is *about* Satan and not about the prince of Tyre is like saying that an analogy and the thing being analogized are the same thing. That's just not clear thinking, but scholars feel that way. For example, if I were a World War II historian describing Hitler's stupidity in attacking Russia and getting caught in the Russian winter like Napoleon did, I'm not saying Hitler was Napoleon. I'm not saying Hitler was a reincarnation of Napoleon. I'm just making an analogy. The two things are different. If a student of mythology notes that *Star Wars* follows the tropes of what Joseph Campbell called "The Hero's Journey" of classical mythology (in other words, it has all the stock elements of heroic tales), they're not saying that *Star Wars* is *about* Osiris or Prometheus or anybody else—any other figure from mythology. Rather, the point is that George Lucas constructed his story according to a pattern.

25:00

It's the same with Ezekiel 28, and I would say Isaiah 14. The authors used the story of a divine rebel to write about the prince of Tyre and, of course, in Isaiah's case it's the king of Babylon. With respect to Ezekiel 28 (and I would include Isaiah 14 here), the writer drew on (this is my view) both a Canaanite tale and Genesis 3. We have a clear reference to Eden—that's not going to come from Canaanite stuff, it comes from Genesis 3. He draws on a couple tales of divine rebellion that have a relationship with each other—rebellion against the highest authority in the divine council in an effort to be as the Most High, an effort to puff himself up to that level. To be the *lead* in their respective worlds. So comparing this divine rebel who wanted to be the lead in the divine council, well the prince of Tyre was like that. He just wanted to be the top dog and wanted everybody to know it. He was thinking of himself as divine or a god or something like that. Again, the character in the analogy isn't the person being analogized. This would seem simple. To me it's pretty simple when you make the distinction like I just did, but it seems to escape some scholars, or it just doesn't make them feel better. That's why I say it's kind of phony.

I would argue, as well (and people who've read *Unseen Realm* know this) that this approach to Ezekiel 28 is very coherent. It's using the analogy of the divine rebellion, precisely because so many elements of Ezekiel 28:1-10 have demonstrable links in the Canaanite divine rebellion stories. The best source for this (and I footnote this in *Unseen Realm*) is the 1990 Harvard University doctoral dissertation by Hugh Roland Page. It was called *The Astral Revolt: A Study of Its Reflexes in Canaanite and Hebrew Literature*. If you go to moreunseenrealm.com and you click on the tab for chapter 11, I have a link to a PDF of that dissertation in that site. That dissertation was later published under the title, *The Myth of Cosmic Rebellion: A Study of Its Reflexes in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature* by Brill. It's expensive. It's a little hard to find, too. You can read the dissertation, where you can get more of the details and argument than I'm going to be able to give you here in a podcast episode. But just so that you know that what I'm going to say here (and what I *have* said in *Unseen Realm*)... I'm not making stuff up! It comes right out of a Harvard dissertation. He gathered all the data and did a nice job so that I didn't have to or somebody else didn't have to. There it is, and I utilize it in *Unseen Realm*. I also have a published article on Isaiah 14 called "The Mythological Provenance of Isaiah 14:12-15: A Reconsideration of the Ugaritic Material" publish in *Vetus Testamentum* back in 2001. There's a link to that at moreunseenrealm.com under the tab for chapter 11.

So you can get a lot of good scholarly peer-reviewed material about this, from which I draw material to defend my position. It's a minority view, but it is a good, solid, academic position. I'm not making one up of my own that I just like. So there's a key point to not be missed here as we go on to some of the other topics that I introduced. Nearly all scholars acknowledge Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 do similar things: they portray a monarch whose hubris is over the top. Isaiah 14 clearly draws on a myth of divine rebellion from Canaanite material to make that

point, and scholars universally acknowledge that—they just disagree on which divine rebellion myth of the ancient world is being used. That's one thing not to miss. The second thing not to miss is there are clear links between Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, which raises the crucial question... here it is: If everyone agrees that Isaiah 14 draws on a myth of a divine rebel and not some rebellious primeval *man*, then why not agree that's the case for Ezekiel 28? Why not? My view is that this refusal to be consistent... The refusal to have a divine rebel myth behind Ezekiel 28 and then acknowledge one in Isaiah 14 is totally inconsistent when it comes to the method of interpretation. If you allow them both to be drawing on the divine rebel story and then you compare that to Genesis 3, you get a matrix of ideas that in my mind is really hard to miss. Again, scholars don't like it for the reasons that I've been talking about. "I don't want to sound stupid. I don't want to say it's about Satan." Well then don't! Make an intelligent dichotomy between the two things like I just did.

The second reason that scholars want to have Adam here... The first one I said was a little bit phony (this reputation thing). I think that's a little empty. But the second one is the gems. Can we just dispense with this quickly? As I write in *Unseen Realm* (pages 79-80), I say this:

30:00

As I mentioned earlier, proponents of the view that Ezekiel is drawing on Adam's rebellion for his analogous portrayal of the prince of Tyre want to argue that the gemstones point to a human priest-king. But the "adornment" can quite easily be telegraphing something else—divinity. All of the gems have one thing in common—they shine or sparkle. Luminescence is a characteristic of divine beings or divine presence across the ancient Near Eastern world and the Old Testament (e.g., Ezek 1:4–7, 27–28 [cf. Ezek 10:19–20]; Dan 10:6; Rev 1:15). This description of the divine cherub in Eden is designed to convey divinity—a shining presence. . .

The "stones of fire" is another clue in that direction. This phrase is associated in other Jewish texts (1 Enoch 18:6–11; 1 Enoch 24–25) with the supernatural, mountainous dwelling of God and the divine council.

It may be objected here that Eden was the dwelling place of God and so the "stones of fire" do not only point to the divine beings of Yahweh's council. That much is true, but there's more to the phrase than a dwelling place. Other scholars have also drawn attention to the ancient Near Eastern propensity to describe divine beings as stars. Job 38:7 refers to the sons of God as "stars," and Isaiah 14:12–13 refers to a being fallen from heaven as the "Day Star, son of Dawn" (ESV) who wanted to ascend above the "stars of God" in the divine realm. The "stones of fire" therefore do not only describe an abode, but also divine entities in that abode.

I have a couple of footnotes in the material. I'm not going to read you all the footnotes, but footnotes 7 and 8 (if you have the book) where I draw on the work of Kelley Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19: 'No One Has Seen What I Have Seen.'* It's an excellent book. Bauch's work discusses the Mesopotamian background to all this. Other sources... There's plenty of material here to argue that all the stones in Ezekiel 28:13 can be accounted for. Now, it's interesting. All of the stones in Ezekiel 20:13 on the surface (except one) are used to describe the supernatural Jerusalem in Revelation 21—in other words, the New Eden in God's new kingdom; the new abode of God.

The lone exception is the Septuagint's ἀνθραξ (*anthrax*) which is its translation of the Hebrew תַּרְשִׁישׁ; (*tarshish*). That word is used elsewhere in Ezekiel to describe the divine throne (Ezekiel 10:9), as well as in Isaiah to describe the new Jerusalem (Isaiah 54:11). Readers who check the Greek closely may presume a point of incongruence with one other item in the Septuagint rendering of Ezekiel 28:13—it uses a different word: ὀνύχιον (*onuchion*) for the Hebrew בֶּרֶקֶת (*borqat*) that is not found in Rev 21.

You say, "Ah, Mike, you can't argue your point! They're not all accounted for." Well, actually they are because instead of *onuchion*, if we look at the terminology that's actually used, instead of *onuchion* we see σαρδόνυξ (*sardonux*) in Rev 21:19 in the place of where we would want to see *onuchion* if he's really citing Ezekiel 28. Well, he uses a different term: *sardonux*. Guess what? Both terms describe the same gem. They describe onyx, which means that yes, we can say that all of the gems of Ezekiel 28 are accounted for in the description of Revelation 21. That is just the fact. You can't say that if you're arguing that the gems refer to the breastplate of the high priest to get your human-priestly figure. You can't say that. You don't have the same coverage. That's the point here.

So let's just dispense with the gems. They don't indicate... There's no secure link back to the human priest. There is a secure link back to the New Eden—the divine council. That's what's going to count here. That's the most thorough connection.

The third reason that I said scholars gravitate toward getting Adam into the picture... The first one was "We don't want to say it's about Satan so we've got to say it's about something else. We've got to say Adam is the point of analogy." The second one was, "The gems point to a human-priestly figure" (but they actually don't). That's the second reason scholars opt for getting Adam into the picture. The third one is, I think, the most substantive one (if I can use that term). It's really where the rubber meets the road—the textual problems in Ezekiel 28. Again, there's going to be more detail at moreunseenrealm.com than what I'm able to give you here, and a lot of it is Hebrew stuff, which doesn't really translate well to podcasting. But we're going to take a shot at it here to explain what's going on in the text and how that is reflected in the Septuagint and how scholars

35:00

decide to pick the Septuagint and run with it in this passage—because it gives them Adam in the chapters. We're going to try to explain that.

The most thorough study on this is very recent (2012), a book by Hector M. Patmore, entitled *Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre: The Interpretation of Ezekiel 28: 11-19 in Late Antiquity*. So it's sort of a historical work. It's published by Brill. What Patmore does in this book is he analyzes the Masoretic Text (traditional text) and the Septuagint very thoroughly, along with the Targums (he throws them in). And he does that on his way to discussing how early church fathers and rabbis in the rabbinic period interpreted the passage. It's a good book to have. I don't always agree with Patmore's conclusions, but he lays out the data pretty well and he points you to good sources. It's very worthwhile having, but again, it's one of these Brill titles so it's expensive. One of the articles in particular that Patmore draws attention to is James Barr's ““Thou art the Cherub’: Ezekiel 28:14 and the Post-Ezekiel Understanding of Genesis 2-3.” Barr was a very famous Hebrew philologist. He was a Hebraist. He's going to defend the Masoretic Text reading against the Septuagint. Of course, he's not the only one, but he's a big name. I'm going to be drawing on Barr a little bit. I'll quote one or two things from him. But the text itself is actually pretty explainable.

So here's how we do this. It would be nice if you actually have a Bible in front of you, either on your screen or on your lap, because I'm going to try to walk you through what your translation probably says and the textual difficulties that underlie the English and that drive some scholars (at least give them a good out, helps them get away from the divine rebel thing in here) to find Adam in the passage. I'm going to try to walk you through this using translations and getting into the textual details.

Ezekiel 28:12, at the beginning of the lament to the prince of Tyre, describes the prince as the "signet of perfection." If you've read *Unseen Realm*, you know that instead of "signet of perfection"... The word for signet is *hôtēm*. That could be rendered, "perfect serpent" or "skillful serpent" if *hôtēm* has what's called an "enclitic mem." If you remember *Unseen Realm*, "enclitic mem" just means a silent "m" that doesn't factor into how you should translate the actual term. It's a rare thing in grammar, but it's possible. It's rare. If you want to argue it here, it's speculative (and I admit that in *Unseen Realm*). I don't *need* *hôtēm* to be "serpent" instead of "signet" to create this relationship to Genesis 3, and of course, also including Isaiah 14. I talked about that in the book, so you can read that. What I want to do is focus on some other things in verse 13.

So let's go to 28:13. We read this: in the Hebrew, the first part of 28:13 is:

בְּעֵדן גִּן-אֱלֹהִים הַיִּתְּ

Be-eden gan-elohim hayiytah

"In Eden, the garden of *Elohim* (the garden of God), you were." Now the verb form translated "you were" (*hayiytah*) is clearly second masculine singular. If you know Hebrew... Sorry—there's really no other way to tell you what's going on here without doing a little bit of the Hebrew. But the grammatical point is important. If you're familiar with foreign languages, you know inflected languages like Spanish, German, French, whatever... Verb forms have person and number. Hebrew is the same way. This is a second masculine singular verb form. That point is important and we're going to come back to it.

40:00

The king of Tyre in verses 11-19 is, therefore, being analogized with some being of whom it is said, "You were in Eden, the garden of God." In the rest of the verse, we get the precious stones description (which, again, has nothing to do with the high priest, but those who want to have a human being the point of the analogy will say it does, but they're all accounted for better elsewhere). At the very least, we've got something going on here with a being in the divine council in Eden in the garden of God. So far we don't know who it is.

Now we get to verse 14, and here's where the trouble really starts. I'm going to read verse 14 in Hebrew and then unpack it. So if you know a little bit of Hebrew, you're probably going to find (or maybe detect with your ear) a couple of issues. So we have:

אַתְּ-כְּרוּב מִמֶּשַׁח הַסּוֹכֵךְ וְנִתְתִּיךָ בְּהַר קֹדֶשׁ אֱלֹהִים הַיְיִת
בְּתוֹךְ אַבְנֵי-אֶשׁ הַתְּהַלְכֶתָּ:

at-cherub mimshach ha-socheka, u-netatiyka be-har qodesh Elohim hayiyta betoch abney-esh hithhal-laktah

Now, the first phrase:

אַתְּ-כְּרוּב מִמֶּשַׁח הַסּוֹכֵךְ
at-cherub mimshach ha-socheka

reads very simply, "You were an anointed covering cherub." That's typically the way you see it in English Bibles. You say, "What's the problem? If it's kind of transparent in most of the English Bibles, why don't we just go with 'You were the anointed covering cherub?'" The problem is the first word: *at*. It is pointed (that is, the vowels that are given to it by the Masoretes) like a second *feminine* singular pronoun. Whereas the figure being talked about up to this point was described

with second *masculine* verb forms, here we hit a feminine and scholars are like, "Well, that's kind of weird. Why would you do that? If you're talking about some figure in Eden, the garden of God, and you're using masculine verb forms to do it, why would you use a feminine here?" So that draws the eye of someone reading it in Hebrew.

To make matters more confusing, the very next verb as you keep going through the line **נָתַתִּיךָ** (*netatiyka*), "I place you" or "I placed you," is a normal verb followed by a second *masculine* singular pronoun. The "you" there in "I placed you" is masculine. So we have masculine forms and then we've got this weird feminine, and now we're back to masculine again. "I placed you (masculine guy) in the midst of the stones of fire" and all this stuff. What's going on here? The final verb form in, "You walked among the stones of fire"—"you walked"—is also masculine. So we have a string of second masculine grammatical references in these two verses, and then we've got this weird one that looks like a feminine right in the middle of it. Scholars who are reading the text in Hebrew say, "That's just odd. There must be something going on here."

Again, it's hard to unpack, but we'll take a shot at it here. This pronoun that is feminine (the one causing the trouble) is just two consonants: *aleph-tav*. This is not the same *aleph-tav* as the *aleph-tav* nonsense in Genesis 1 where people say, "Oh, we get Jesus—the Alpha and the Omega." I've blogged about that silliness before. This is the same two consonants but it's a different word. You can spell different words with two consonants, and that's what Hebrew does.

So we've got *aleph-tav* here (two consonants) and it can be the pronoun, but it would be feminine. At least that's what scholars are predominantly saying. But it could also be a preposition if it just had a different vowel. If it was **אֶת** (*et*) instead of **אָתָּ** (*at*), then we wouldn't have this problem. So we'd get rid of this odd feminine form here in the midst of all this other stuff that makes sense. Maybe, since the vowels were added later by the Masoretes, maybe since we just have these two consonants... Maybe it's a preposition. That is what the Septuagint translator assumed. And you say, "Well, big deal. Who cares?" Well, here's why you should care. If you make this little two-letter word a preposition, here's what the verse reads: "*With* an anointed covering cherub, I placed you in the garden of God." Instead of "You were an anointed covering cherub," it's "*With* an anointed covering cherub, I placed you in the garden of God."

There you go. All of a sudden, you have two figures in the garden. One of them is a cherub and the other one isn't. The other one was placed in the garden *with* the cherub. And so if you go with the Septuagint, what it allows you to do is it allows you to say, "Who would have been with a member of the divine council in Eden? Adam! Because all the other references are masculine." All of a sudden, Adam appears—poof!—in the passage if you go with the Septuagint translation. The

45:00

translator decided those two little letters (that little particle there), that's not a pronoun because if it was a pronoun it would be feminine and that doesn't make any sense with all the other stuff. So it must be a preposition, and when you translate it accordingly you get "*With* an anointed covering cherub I placed you in the garden of God." Adam is there. He like materializes in the text if you go with the Septuagint here. Now that is really the guts of this whole issue, this problem, because scholars are going to be looking at the Hebrew text. They're going to be looking at the Septuagint and it's like, "I'm going to go with the Septuagint guy! End of story, end of problem. I don't have to wonder what in the world the Masoretes were thinking to point that like a feminine. Solution. Problem over. I can move on now, and I've got Adam in the garden as the point of analogy to the king of Tyre." There you go. Again, this is the majority view.

But guess what? There's another solution that lets the Masoretic Text stand as it is. You don't need the Septuagint. You all know me. The Masoretic Text has no sacrosanct status. I'm not saying, "It's the Masoretic Text and we have to go with that because it's the Masoretic Text!" No, I don't assign it any higher status than the Septuagint or any other text. There were multiple traditions of the Hebrew Bible that go all the way back to Qumran. All three of the major ones (Septuagint, Masoretic Text, and the Samaritan Pentateuch) are all witnessed at Qumran. They all hit the same chronological wall. There's no reason to elevate the Masoretic Text to sacrosanct level, as if it dropped in somebody's lap from heaven. There's no reason to do that. But the Masoretes knew what they were doing. They were professional scribes. And when they pointed something the way they did, you ought to at least ask, "Well, instead of assuming that they had a bad day or they made an error here (they just pointed it wrong), maybe there's another solution." And guess what? There is.

James Barr and a number of other Hebrew scholars have pointed out the other solution. And here it is. What looks like a second feminine singular pronoun form (the thing that gives everybody the trouble) is actually still masculine because it's what Hebrew scholars call a "primitive form of the pronoun." It's a pronoun spelling from an earlier stage of Hebrew than most biblical Hebrew. There are actually several of these in the Hebrew Bible found elsewhere, and a range of Hebrew reference grammars have that apparent feminine pronoun in Ezekiel 28:14 actually labeled as masculine. And *that* would take away the problem, too. You don't need the Septuagint guy to say, "That's a preposition. That's the only way to have this make any sense." You don't need that. The three occurrences in which Hebrew grammarians say that this happens clearly are Numbers 11:15, Deuteronomy 5:27, and a bunch of them include Ezekiel 28:14. Waltke and O'Connor include it, Joüon and Muraoka include it, Gesenius includes it. Hebrew grammarians know what's going on here. You don't have to go with the Septuagint here. Barr actually says this:

A very large number of commentators have followed the Greek text [Septuagint]. R.R. Wilson lists many of them in an interesting article, mentioning the numerous difficulties that are thought to arise if the text is not emended after the Greek version. . . .

Whatever the obscurities and possible errors of the MT at other points in Ezekiel 28, at this particular point it is much easier to suppose that the LXX failed to recognize תָּא as the pronoun than to suppose that it really was the preposition or particle, later wrongly vocalized by the Masoretic tradition as the extremely rare form meaning 'thou'. To put it in the other way, if the Masoretic tradition had seen the form תָּא and there was some doubt what it was, it is understandable that they would have thought of diagnosing it as 'with' or as the direct object particle, but it is frankly unbelievable that they would have identified it as the very rare form of 'thou'.

50:00

What Barr is saying here is that he doubts that the Septuagint translator of Ezekiel would have known that the word in question was actually the rare pronoun. He doesn't think that the guy knew it. So that makes the Septuagint decision to treat it as a preposition understandable. That's all Barr is saying. It's possible that the Septuagint translator had no idea what he was looking at. That's possible, but we'll never know what he was familiar with or not. In the other two instances (the other two examples where you have *aleph-tav* that is pointed like a feminine pronoun but is actually masculine), considering the word a preposition is grammatically impossible, since the form in question immediately precedes verbal forms that are masculine—masculine participle, second masculine imperfect. So the translator wouldn't have struggled there, but he could have struggled in Ezekiel 28. And Barr says he probably just didn't know it or recognize it. You have the same situation, as well, as you do with any other translation. The Septuagint wasn't translated by one guy. It was a committee. Lots of hands translated different books. So you had somebody struggle here in Ezekiel 28, and Barr says they just didn't know that that form of the pronoun could be masculine. They just didn't know that. There's no reason to go with the Septuagint here. And I agree with Barr.

So in a nutshell, if you don't follow the Septuagint here, then you have zero ammunition for saying that the prince of Tyre is being analogized with Adam. You've got nothing. Honestly, even without Ezekiel 28, my view of the *nachash* would still stand (again, this whole matrix of ideas that I've argued for in *Unseen Realm*). I could still just say, "Hey, Ezekiel 28 is its own thing and we need to look in Isaiah 14 and Genesis 3." Because Isaiah 14 doesn't have any of these grammar problems. All I'm arguing for is consistency. I'm arguing for the MT here because it's more consistent with the obvious relationship between Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 to have them both be using an analogy of a divine rebel. It's just more consistent. The bottom line is that the grammatical oddity in Ezekiel 28:14

does *not* compel having Adam with the cherub in the garden, and scholars need to stop pretending that it does. It *doesn't* compel that.

That brings us to another grammatical problem. It's related to the first one. You go down to verse 16 and you get another one of these. It's kind of like the same thing. The Masoretic Text reads this... If you just keep the Masoretic Text as it is, you keep the vowel pointings as the scribes have them here, this is what you get. This is Patmore's translation:

By the abundance of your merchandise they filled your midst with violence and you sinned [second masculine form]. **So I cast you** [second masculine suffix] **as a profanity from the mountain of God and I expelled you** [second masculine suffix], **O cherub who covers, from the midst of stones of fire.**

That's verse 16. The point is, if you translated the verse that way according to the Masoretic Text, it very clearly has God punishing a divine being. He's punishing a cherub, and he's the only one in the picture. He's the only object of punishment. He's the only one in the scene that God is punishing. If you go with the Septuagint, here's what you get:

By the abundance of your merchandise internally you were full of violence and you sinned. So I cast you as a profanity from the mountain of God and a cherub who covers expelled you from the midst of stones of fire.

There you go again. The Septuagint clearly has a cherub expelling somebody else, and that somebody else would be Adam. So again, the Septuagint changes the whole picture. Now the issue here in this verse is one verb form: אִבְדַּקָּא (*abbedka*). The consonantal text of the form is אִבְדַּקָּא (*aleph-bet-daleth-kaph*). The form can be pointed as either third person (אִבְדַּקָּא, *ibbedka*) or first person (אִבְדַּקָּא, *abbedka*). The Masoretic Text has the latter—the first person, "I expelled you." The Septuagint, though, treats the verb form as third person, so that you have a cherub expelling somebody else. Why does it do that? Well, it treats it as third person because of the translator's choice in verse 14 to have "*with an anointed covering cherub you were in the garden*"—to have two people there. So the Septuagint treats verse 16 in concert with what it does in verse 14. It creates two figures in the garden (or the mountain scene), and there you go. There you have Adam in the text.

55:00

I want to say again that it's best to go with the Masoretic Text here because of consistency with Isaiah 14. You have a divine rebel in the background here. And of course, then they are both consistent with Genesis 3. It's best to go with MT here and go with first person. Why? It makes sense with retaining the Masoretic

Text pronoun in verse 14 and the following verbs. All the following verbs are first person. They would obviously be in concert with a first person form with these ambiguous consonants. Now, to be fair, there are ways that using a third person here (having Adam in the picture)... You can get around the first person verb forms by saying that God has entered the picture and is talking to somebody. Okay, you can do that. But here's the bigger point. There's no compelling reason to do that. The Masoretic Text as it is works just fine. And if you go with the Masoretic Text, the person to whom the prince of Tyre is being compared *cannot* be Adam. It's a rebel divine being, which aligns nicely with Isaiah 14 and Genesis 3. That's the bottom line.

So let's summarize, as we wrap up the episode, what we get in the chapter, what we have here, what's going on here. Think about what's said about the figure to whom the prince/king of Tyre is being compared. Think about how it doesn't work with Adam. This is what I'll ask you to do as we wrap up.

1. You have the brilliant appearance. The gems do not correspond exactly to the breastplate of the high priest. There are things that don't work there. They do point to a member of the divine council or the divine council headquarters itself. They're accounted for in the New Eden in Revelation 21. So that tells us that the point must be the divine council, not the human Israelite priest. So if that doesn't work (if you don't have the priest there) then having Adam there is kind of pointless. Arguing that Adam is there on the basis of the gems doesn't make any sense.
2. This being (whoever it was as the point of the analogy) is perfect in beauty. That is something never said of Adam in Genesis. You can see how preachers would want to preach that, but it's just never said.
3. This being fell by virtue of hubris, wanting to dethrone God. Again, that is never said of Adam. Period. Adam is never described that way.
4. (I got this from Barr and I kind of like it.) Ezekiel stresses the wisdom of this being—a feature which makes him rather more similar to the serpent of Genesis 3 and less like the humans of that story, who conspicuously lacked that quality (laughs). Bingo. It's true! Who was the smart one in the story of Genesis 3? It's the serpent, the divine one. That's the one who has advanced knowledge. That's the one who's wise. Not Adam.

So the bottom line for listeners and readers of *Unseen Realm* as it relates to this podcast is this: Mike is not crazy. My views are not idiosyncratic. I am not out on a limb. You'll hear that kind of thing from pastors who know enough Hebrew to be dangerous who want to avoid tethering Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 to Genesis 3 in any way. If you hear it, you know you can safely ignore it. My view is rooted firmly in scholarship and the text. Those who want to see a human rebel here (Adam)

behind Ezekiel 28 have to ignore or explain away the cosmic rebellion motifs that I discuss a little bit in *Unseen Realm* and in more detail on moreunseenrealm.com and they also have to abandon (at least in a couple places) the Masoretic vocalization—what the Masoretic scribes saw in the text. In other words, they have to choose to do these things and choose not to see the connections with Isaiah 14 and Genesis 3. So again, I'm not crazy. I'm not idiosyncratic. I'm sucking this out of my thumb. What I'm saying about the chapter is rooted in good scholarship, and that's what's going on in Ezekiel 28. We have the prince of Tyre, the king of Tyre, being compared to a divine being who rebelled in the divine council. And that's what you get in Isaiah 14 and that's what you get in Genesis 3.

TS: Maybe we should rename this show "Textual Criticism" because that's probably our best show on textual criticism right there.

1:00:00

MH: Right. It is a good illustration of why the nitpicky little text details sometimes really matter.

TS: And what do you say about the people who take the Septuagint version? You don't elevate one over the other.

MH: It's just a choice.

TS: So what do you say to those people who *choose* the Septuagint version? I mean, because you just said that one or the other aren't elevated over each other.

MH: I would say, if you're choosing it here, I want to know why. What are you afraid of? Is there a reason that you're nervous about going with the Masoretic Text (the divine rebel)? My second question would be, "Why are you ignoring all of the dipping into Canaanite literature that is clearly about the divine council and a divine council rebellion—a rebellion within the council of a divine being? Why are you ignoring the way the chapter hooks into that stuff in making your decision? So those are the two things I want to know: why does it make you nervous and are you aware of the material that supports a divine rebel backdrop? That's what I want to know.

TS: There you go. I'm glad I drank coffee today, Mike. I'm not going to lie. As I take a drink here... it served me well this episode. Maybe we should have a disclaimer at the beginning of this show to be sure you're caffeinated or whatever.

MH: Every once in a while, you've gotta drill down into the Hebrew stuff. But get the transcript. It'll help you a little bit. Again, I decided not to torment Brenda, our transcript person (laughing), so she'll be able to navigate the waters here. [Brenda: I did my best... thanks for the notes, Mike!]

TS: That's good. And speaking of the transcripts, we're almost caught up. I will announce that, Mike. I need to remind everybody that I created a Naked Bible Podcast Facebook page and I put up there a picture of us, and when we have transcripts and things related to the podcast... So if you want to follow the podcast Facebook page, just search for it. Please do that. And also, Mike, the contest about exposing your friends and family on social media out there on the internet ends next week: January 31. Actually it ends in a couple days! Not next week—a couple days.

MH: We're right on the edge of it, yeah.

TS: I'll be notifying those people who won, so you've still got the weekend to do your best. The winner, again, is going to win your book that's coming out in March, right Mike?

MH: Yeah, the publisher actually contacted me this past week. Their date for when *Reversing Hermon* will be available is March 7. They said everything looks like we're going to hit that date without any trouble, so March 7 is the date given to me, so I'm giving it to you.

TS: That's great. And next week, continuing with Ezekiel, correct?

MH: Yep. Not sure yet if we'll do one or two chapters. We'll take a look at it and see what we can do—what's interesting in there. But yeah, now we turn from Tyre and Sidon to Egypt. There's some interesting stuff in there.

TS: All right, Mike. This might be one of my favorite episodes to date. Appreciate that. Always interested in textual criticism and getting...

MH: Sometimes it really matters, and this is one of these cases. Because people really do wonder, "Where do you get Adam?" Well, you get it in the Septuagint. That's where you get him.

TS: Okay, well, just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.

