

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 160

Q&A 21

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Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Dr. Heiser answers your questions about:

- God's opinion of the Transjordanian tribes
- Purgatory
- What people can understand from what nature reveals, and how this relates to salvation
- The word "hosts" in Exodus
- The Eternal Sonship view
- Binitarians as brothers in Christ
- Soul sleep
- The Holy Spirit related to Divine Council matters
- Blaspheming the Holy Spirit

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 160: Our 21st Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing this week?

MH: Pretty good. Again, busy, as usual, but a pretty productive week. Had a good time in Florida.

TS: Yeah, how was that?

MH: It was fun! There were two events. One was like 9 to 5, most of the day. Then that evening I went over to another church and did an hour/hour and a half, something like that. It was two Calvary Chapel churches in Indian Harbor—technically Melbourne, Florida. It was a full day, but it was good. It was a good day.

TS: Good, good. Did you get to actually go to the beach while you were there to... get nekked or...

MH: (laughs) No.

TS: I saw some pictures. You went to NASA, so that's pretty cool.

MH: Yeah, my wife was along and my daughter, Simmie (the one we call Summit). We took part of the Sunday to do NASA, to do some kind of family thing. So that was fun. It was actually pretty cool, to be honest with you. It was pretty impressive. I saw lots of big stuff that could blow up! (laughing) What better could there be than that? It's kind of staggering the scale of some of these things, but that's what I wanted to see. It was good.

TS: Too bad there wasn't a launch or something.

MH: I know. I did look ahead of time but they didn't have anything scheduled—either them or SpaceX. If we ever get down there to that area again, I'll certainly look again. That's the one thing we missed that everybody kind of likes to see, but it didn't happen.

TS: Well, good deal, Mike. I just want to say congratulations to our Facebook group. There are over a thousand people in there. For you non-Facebook people, we will be rolling out our own online community this summer, so hang tight on that. Lots of features coming with that, but here's just a shout-out to everybody on the Facebook group. A thousand strong—we're getting up there!

MH: I saw that we were creeping up on that, but I haven't looked in a few days. So we're over? Over a thousand! That's pretty impressive.

TS: What's impressive is the knowledge of people! They're sharing links and thoughts and thinking through some of these complicated issues. It's awesome.

MH: Yeah, you see that at events, too. People ask good questions. They're thinking. It's not "church as usual" or sort of Christian conversation as usual in those contexts.

TS: No, but it's great to have a place where if you go to church or talk to your friends, you could come back to our Naked Bible group on Facebook and ask some of these questions and get some answers or get pointed in the right direction or to some resources, then go back to the real world and be able to have the answers yourself. That's what a lot of people use it for. I think it's great.

MH: Yeah, I would agree. Like I said, it's pretty impressive. That's a good number. That's a significant number.

TS: Absolutely. Well, Mike, twenty-one Q & A's!

MH: Hard to believe. I know I say that every time, but it's true! (laughing)

TS: I hope you've got your thinking cap on. Are you ready?

MH: Let's jump in here and take a whack at it.

TS: Sounds good. Our first one is actually going to come from Pastor John from the Calvary Chapel Surfside in Florida. His question is:

Do you think Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh have gotten a bad rap by the Bible teachers when, in fact, they were fulfilling what God wanted done—occupying land from the divine council rebels?

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MH: Yeah. I would agree. For listeners, the context of this kind of question is going to be that they were doing conquest stuff on the other side of the Jordan (what we academically call the Transjordan, so not Canaan-proper). So there is some discussion. The tribes do sort of get beat up on by certain Bible teachers for either wanting land on the other side or engaging in conquest on the other side, but God clearly helps them in the conquest. They get approval from God. God never steps in and says, "Woah, wait a minute—you're not supposed to be doing this! I'm not going to bless you, I'm going to let you get destroyed." Kind of like the incident at Ai. There's nothing like that that ever happens, so I think yeah, they do get a bad rap. There's clearly a purpose in it—the elimination of the Rephaim and the Anakim. That actually isn't new. If you go back and read Deuteronomy 2 and 3, it's very clear that Israel's relatives (Jacob's relatives) and therefore, guess what—Abraham's relatives—have been eliminating giant clans in the Transjordan long before the conquest, long before Joshua and Moses ever get there. You read about that with the Emim and the Zamzummim and some of the other names for the giant clans. They're in the Transjordan and the text clearly says that the descendants of Esau and, of course, Lot and the Moabites and the Ammonites... They've been ridding the land of these bloodlines, these descendants of the Nephilim, for a long time. So what Israel is doing... When the Jacobites/Israelites finally get there, they're doing the same thing. God says in Deuteronomy 2 and 3 that he was behind the elimination of the giant clans earlier by other relatives of Israel and, therefore, Abraham. It's actually pretty consistent. To me, what we read in Deuteronomy 2 and 3 alone settles the question. God wouldn't have had this agenda and given them victory if they were doing something wrong.

We should say something, though, about geography. This really gets us into the issue of what are the boundaries of the promised land? I've commented before on other episodes that the descriptions of the boundaries of the land are not consistent in the Torah and in other places, too. You'll get what's promised described in slightly different ways. In some passages, you'll actually get descriptions that could be read in more than one way. I think that's actually a factor here. Most people assume the descriptions of the land forbid any part of the Transjordan from being included. That really isn't the case. Moses and

Joshua are told by God not to harass certain regions in the Transjordan—south of the northern part, south of Bashan, where Moses ends up with Og and Sihon, the two Amorite kings there. So Moses and Joshua are told, "Go over to the Transjordan. Don't harass the people in Moab, Edom, and Ammon. Edom already belonged to Jacob's brother, Esau, and his people, which means it had been given by God to Abraham's seed. Because Esau, as a brother of Jacob, is part of Abraham's seed. He's not part of the line of promise, but he's still descended from Abraham. Remember, God had promised Abraham and his seed a land in Genesis 12:1, and if you go back to Genesis 12:1, there are no boundaries given there. It just says:

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

Again, that's kind of open-ended. When you get to Genesis 15, the conversation narrows to Jacob's line—to the "line of promise." There's a reference in Genesis 15 when the land is described. I might as well just direct people there. Genesis 15:18 says:

¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates...

We get some dimensions there, but that conversation had been prefaced earlier (like in verse 13) where the Lord says to Abraham:

"Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years...

It's a reference to Egypt. So we know in Genesis 15 that we're talking about the descendants of Jacob—the Israelites proper—the promised line. But earlier you didn't have that restriction. It's just that "Abraham's seed" (generally) is going to have a land. And here in Genesis 15, it narrows it a little bit. That's the kind of thing you're dealing with. When you get these statements about the land, what group of Abraham's seed are we talking about? How do we understand the dimensions of the land? The whole region is going to be possessed by Abraham's seed broadly, so we might need to rethink what we mean by "promised land" in that sense. In other words, do we restrict "promised land" to just Jacob's line (Israel's line), or do we widen "promised land" to Abraham's descendants generally? That's an issue there. Again, it gets complicated because, like with Esau, they settle in the Transjordan and later on you bring the Ishmael thing into here. Those people are settling in the same region, but

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historically, that region becomes populated by people who adopt different religions like Islam. They want to go back to Ishmael as the descendants of Abraham.

I don't want to get too far afield on this, but it's not so neat because Islam is a religion, not an ethnic group. So you've got a difficulty there in kind of parsing how to think about the land and who possesses it and Abraham's seed and all this sort of thing. But the reality is that Abraham's seed is the original touch-point of the promise about land. In Genesis 12, it's not narrowed to a specific part/portion of those who would descend from Abraham. Later on, it does and it is.

Let's talk a little bit before we leave this about some of the passages and how we even understand the parameters. Somebody might say, "The Israelites in the conquest are Jacob's seed. That's how we should think about this. And so they shouldn't have taken the northern Transjordan, anyway, because of the parameters of Genesis 15:18." This is where the discussion is going to go. But you have to look at what the verse says. Genesis 15:18-21 says:

¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim,²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

Oh, wait a minute! If you're getting the Hittites in there and the Kenites (depending on when you put them), the Perizzites and the Rephaim, wait a minute! Now we've got Rephaim in the Transjordan. We've got the Kenites who also can be put in the Transjordan. We've got the Hittites that are really, really far north. What do we do with this? It's not as neat of a picture as critics of the Transjordanian tribal conquest paint. It just isn't. If you look at the verse, it sounds like "river of Egypt" and "great river, the river Euphrates" are essentially northern and southern boundary points. But again, the Hittites... That's going to put you up in Anatolia. That's actually further north than the Euphrates. So what do we do with that? Is it Hittites living somewhere else? It's just not so neat. We tend to read these passages with a preconceived notion based on the tribal allotments, but does that really help? The tribal allotments include the Transjordan. How do we know we're looking clearly at what was intended? There's a wild card here. If you read Deuteronomy 11:24, it says this (the context of which is the Mosaic era).

²⁴ Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours. Your territory shall be from the wilderness [south] to the Lebanon [north] and from the River [in Egypt?], the river Euphrates, to the western sea.

The kicker here, the wild card, is that last part. The wilderness to Lebanon is a north/south set of parameters, very obviously. And then the river... is that Egypt or not? If you take the river (comma), like some English translations have as the river Euphrates, then we're not dealing with the river of Egypt. We're talking about the river Euphrates. And then it says "to the western sea." Well, if the other two things (the wilderness and Lebanon) are north and south, that means that Euphrates and the western sea are east/west boundaries. That means that the Euphrates is not (maybe or exclusively) to be read as a northern boundary, but rather an eastern boundary. If that's the case, the Transjordan is obviously included.

15:00 What I'm getting at here is this picture that people think they know what the land of the promise is and what the conquest parameters are supposed to be in there. They think this is a neat picture. This is not. It just isn't. There's really no other way to say it. It could very well, easily (based on Deuteronomy 11:24)... the Euphrates could be an eastern boundary, and maybe it's supposed to be a northern and eastern boundary. But then, again, what do you do with the Hittites? What about the Kenites when it comes to the southern part of it? It's just not a neat picture. I think it's wrong-headed, generally, to criticize these tribes in the Transjordan. People who do so, I think, do so naively (if I could just say it that way) because there are inherent ambiguities and interpretive difficulties here when it comes to the geographical parameters of the land. I'm not going to go into it, but I'd also say Genesis 13:14 is a factor here, too.

¹⁴The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward..."

In other words, that's going to be your land. Are we really supposed to assume we know where he's standing? Let's say he's standing near the Dead Sea or something like that (because Genesis 14 is going to take us into that area when Abraham has to confront the confederation when Lot gets kidnapped). In other words, "When he looked north, he was looking straight up the Jordan River and only looking to the left. He couldn't see or he refused to look at the Transjordan." That's just absurd! Then there's the question of how far east he could see. In other words, what does a verse like that really mean? How does it factor into how we think about the promised land?

Just to wrap up this question, this is not a neat picture. So criticisms levied at the tribes based upon what people think is a neat picture are just not good criticisms.

TS: All right. Chris has two questions. His first one is:

Is there a middle place besides the idea of Purgatory for those who have never heard the Gospel?

MH: Boy, I'm not quite sure what's intended besides the idea of Purgatory. In other words, as a substitute for Purgatory or in addition to Purgatory? I don't really know how to read this question, but I'll just throw something out here.

I don't believe that there's biblical evidence for Purgatory if what's in view of that is the Roman Catholic idea—in other words, this place where the dead go before the final resurrection/judgment so that they can kind of work off or become more deserving, get their sins taken care of. There's some sort of temporary punishment for sins, the result of which will enable you to have eternal life. I think that's a bogus idea that's contrary to the Gospel. Your sins were judged at the cross—period. This idea of purgation as part of a process to wind up in heaven, I think, is inherently unbiblical. So if that's what we're talking about, I guess my answer in part is no.

But if the question means, is there a place where the dead go before the final resurrection or the judgment that could be either positive or negative, just generally, and has nothing to do with purgation to get you more fitted for heaven, then I would think that idea is found in scripture. You have like Luke 16. Whether it's a parable or not, the content of the parable is this intermediate state (Abraham's bosom). There are other phrases that go with the idea that when you die you go someplace. You cross over to the supernatural/spiritual realm, where you are until the final judgment. If we look at Luke 16 (and we don't have to restrict our discussion to Luke 16)... In the Second Temple period, there's a lot of this kind of talk, where there's this intermediate place. There's this place in the spiritual world where the righteous go and the unrighteous go, and then at the end everybody is resurrected and the situation is more or less made permanent. If that's what we're talking about, I think there's some scriptural justification for some sort of intermediate state. I think there was part of the question about what about those who've never heard that Gospel? Is that part of the question?

TS: No, the next one is:

In the beginning of Romans, what is Paul expecting people to understand from what nature reveals, and in what way does this understanding lead to salvation for those to whom the Gospel was never preached?

MH: Okay. We'll take that now. It does relate to this Purgatory idea because of where you end up when you die and that sort of thing. Paul never says that what he describes in Romans 1 is sufficient for salvation. He never makes that claim. It's not sufficient. He's talking about knowledge about God and God's nature. And of course, part of God's nature is both judgment and mercy. You learn things about God from the creation. What you don't learn is the plan of salvation. I would say, though, with this question and any question about what happens

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when people die and, specifically, what if they never heard the Gospel... My view of this is that we need to look at the Old Testament for some precedent here in terms of what might be the case. What might be the possibility? For instance, you have people in the Old Testament who are accepted by God and considered examples of faith that don't know the first thing about the cross because the cross hadn't happened yet. Some of those people are Gentiles and pagans who have no knowledge of the Torah, the Law, the Jewish festivals, the sacrificial system. They not only don't have knowledge of that, they don't have access to it. But they're still considered examples of faith by Jesus himself. I think Jesus is a good authority here.

I'm trying to remember if this was posted in Facebook or something. A couple weeks ago I was asked to be pulpit fill at my church. It's the second time I've spoken on a Sunday morning since 2004. Hopefully if people watch the video, they didn't conclude from that, "We can see why!" But my sermon/message was on Naaman—specifically, the Naaman story. We're familiar with that story because of *Unseen Realm* stuff, but I didn't do cosmic geography. I wanted to focus on him as a person. Naaman is referenced in the New Testament one time, and it's connected to the incident where Jesus goes into the synagogue at Nazareth and reads at the beginning of his ministry. (People can look for the sermon. I think it was posted on Facebook. If not, we'll say something about it again or I'll put something on the blog about it, because I didn't post on the blog about it at all.) To cut to the chase, Naaman is referenced by Jesus, along with the widow of Zarephath as examples of faith. He gets into a conversation with the Pharisees and the Pharisees are like, "Yeah, show us some spectacular stuff! Do some miracles here, dude!" Jesus marvels at their unbelief and basically says, "That's not going to happen here because of your unbelief." And then he says, "Hey, there was only one widow in all Israel among all those other widows that actually was blessed by God, and it's the widow of Zarephath. And only Naaman, the Syrian—same thing." What these two individuals have in common is that the reason why Jesus holds them out to contrast them with the Pharisees, who are unbelieving and who lack faith, is because of what they do.

You go back to the Naaman story and after he's cleansed, he says, "Now I know that the true God is right here in Israel. I'm not going to sacrifice to any other deity. I've gotta go back to Syria, but I'm going to take some dirt with me." He's going to build his own little altar and he's going to do whatever he imagines in his head that he's supposed to do to sacrifice to Yahweh. It's very clear that his believing loyalty is aligned to Yahweh and no other. But that is the entirety of what he knows and what he responds to. He will never be circumcised. He will never observe the Sabbath. He'll never read the Torah. He'll never participate in a Jewish ritual on the calendar. He won't do *anything*. He brings *nothing* to the table except his simple belief that Yahweh is the God of all gods and he will worship no other.

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The widow of Zarephath is held up as an example. Why? Because she believes the word of the prophet about making the little cake, and the oil never runs out and all that. She believes! She believes in a very simple thing: that this is God's prophet and God will do what he said through the prophet. She believes, and she's held up by Jesus as an example (with Naaman) of the faith. Zarephath is in Phoenician territory. These are both pagans! They have no connection to the Law. They have no theology. The only thing they have is their faith in the God of Israel. Period.

Now, if Jesus accepts them and Jesus holds them out as examples of what he'd like to see among the people, I would suggest to you that they are "believers." They're accepted by God. We're going to meet them in heaven. They don't know anything about the cross. They basically know almost nothing. But yet (and here's the key and why I bring up the Old Testament precedent) they respond correctly to the information that God gave them. So when it comes to this whole question about what happens to people who've never heard the Gospel, the short answer is that we don't really know. We don't really know the entire circumstance. Maybe the Spirit of God, or God through some other intervention, actually gave them revelation of something. Maybe it was as simple as Romans 1, which isn't the Gospel. But God knows if they responded in faith the way he wanted them to respond. And if he accepted individuals in the Old Testament period on that basis, I see no reason to conclude that he can't do it again or won't do it again or hasn't done it since then. So there are people who are considered believers who will be in heaven who have never heard the Gospel. This is up to God to decide. The one thing that they all are going to have in common is that their believing loyalty is aligned to the correct God—to the true God and no other. And they're not also choosing to have no god at all—the whole atheist thing. That's what everybody's going to have in heaven. I think we need to think about this question in the context of the Old Testament precedent and leave it up to God. So that's how I approach that whole set of ideas there.

TS: David in the U.K. is curious about the ESV's use of the word "hosts" in Exodus.

In your opinion, does the word "hosts" in Exodus refer simply to Israel as an army?

MH: *Tsaba'* ("host") can refer to several things: multitudes of humans, multitudes of animals, multitudes of divine beings, the heavenly host, that sort of thing. It really depends on context. The context is going to dictate which host you're talking about. In Exodus 6, 7, and 12, I think it's pretty clear that we're talking about hosts of people. For instance, in Exodus 6:26:

²⁶ **These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said: "Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts."**

Okay, it's "their hosts." It's the people of Israel's hosts. It's not the "Lord's hosts." You get the idea. Exodus 7:4:

⁴Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment.

So he doesn't say that "my hosts" will be the catalyst to bringing out the people, like there's going to be some cosmic battle here in which you have angelic hosts pouring down out of the sky so that Israel can escape out of Egypt. No, it says he's going to bring "my hosts, my people the children of Israel." These are three concatenated phrases that refer to the same thing. "Bring my hosts out of the land." Well, what hosts were brought out of the land? Well, that was the people. So I think we just need to look at the context in which the term occurs and make our judgments from there. Words don't mean anything in and of themselves. Words have meaning based on usage in context.

TS: Heath is wondering:

What are Mike's thoughts are on the Eternal Sonship doctrine?

MH: I think the best way to answer this is that I don't believe in adoptionist Christology. Godhead thinking is clear to me in the Old Testament. You have the binitarian thing. Once you understand binitarianism, you're going to see places where the Spirit is brought into the discussion. You're going to see the Spirit talked about in similar ways that the Second Yahweh figure is talked about. And if we have a Godhead, that means you have three persons who are co-eternal. Eternal Sonship is related to, but not the same as the "Eternal Subordination" view. Without going down too many rabbit trails here, I think the best way to just answer this question is that I don't believe in adoptionist Christology. Godhead thinking is clear to me in the Old Testament. And if that's the case, when it gets carried over into the New Testament where Jesus is the Second Yahweh figure and the Holy Spirit is-but-isn't Jesus, there you have your three. You have trinitarianism. You don't need an adoptionist model in the New Testament if you have Godhead thinking go all the way back into the Old Testament.

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TS: Heath's second question is:

If a binitarian accepts the orthodox trinitarian's view of the Father and Son but differs on the personality of the Holy Spirit, would a trinitarian still be able to view that binitarian as a brother in Christ?

MH: I'm going to assume here that when he says "differs on the personality of the Holy Spirit" that what he means is "doesn't think the Holy Spirit is part of the

Godhead." That's actually a different question than whether the Holy Spirit is a person or not, but I think that's probably what the question intends. So let's say, can a person who's binitarian and not trinitarian still be considered a brother in Christ, or something like that. That's what I'm hearing in the question.

I would say I think that failure to see the three-in-one in Scripture is just that—it's a failure. Again, once you understand binitarianism, trinitarianism derives from two trajectories, essentially. You've got Two Powers language applied to the Spirit (in other words, the Spirit is brought into the discussion) and again, not made precisely and totally distinct from the other two, but the Spirit is talked about in the same ways—in particular, as the Second Yahweh figure gets talked about, minus the embodiment. But there's this blurring of the Spirit. The Spirit is brought into the conversation, as it were, with the invisible Yahweh and the visible Yahweh—the anthropomorphized Yahweh—and they are interchanged. That's one trajectory.

Second, seeing how Jesus is the Second Yahweh figure (the Second person) and then noting how the New Testament identifies the Spirit with him (Jesus) in certain passages. I talk about this in *Unseen Realm* a lot (at least I spent a couple pages on it). You have passages where the phrase "the Spirit of God" occurs in tandem with the Spirit of Jesus or the Spirit of Christ. It's the same person. You have Paul say on two occasions... he refers to Jesus as "the Lord, who is the Spirit." So you have this sense that, just as Jesus is but isn't God (he's the Son, he's not the Father, but they're still the same)... again, this whole Godhead talk that we're used to. It used to be part of Judaism because of the Two Powers issue. So Jesus is God, but he also isn't the Father. Well, the Spirit is but isn't Jesus. Once you see how Jesus is the focal point for both the Father and the Spirit, that's actually where trinitarianism derives from. I think the failure to see that is just kind of not knowing your Bible well enough or maybe not knowing what you're looking at (that might be a better way to put it) because typically the way trinitarianism is talked about is it's proof-texted. I think we're much better off to go beyond proof-texting.

Having said all that, if people can't see that, they're not damned. Salvation isn't about the ability to articulate theology. Not just the theology of the Trinity, but the theology of a whole bunch of things. Romans 5:8 doesn't say that Christ died for us while we were articulating trinitarianism correctly, or on the condition that we successfully articulate a trinitarian theology. It doesn't say that at all! John 3:16 says "whosoever believes in Christ"—the one God gave to be the savior of the world—will be saved. It doesn't say that "whosoever understands how to navigate adoptionism and Eternal Sonship/Subordination..." It doesn't say any of that. "Brother in Christ" (which was part of the question) is a phrase used of believers—those who put their entire hope of eternal life and forgiveness of sin (integrating no merit of their own) on the work of Christ on the cross. That's what makes you a believer. It's an exclusive thing. There are no multiple roads to salvation. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the

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Father except through me." He doesn't say, "You can get through me once I hear you successfully articulate trinitarian theology." It just doesn't say that. You can get lots of doctrines wrong and still believe that there is no other means of salvation. In other words, you can believe the correct object of salvation and you can believe the necessity of believing in that object of salvation and still not be able to articulate very well how it all works or why we need the incarnation or why there is a Godhead. Those are related but distinct things. You can't exchange understanding of the Trinity with belief in the Gospel. You can't swap those in and out and have the same result. You can have someone who can articulate trinitarianism perfectly and if they don't believe that Christ is the lone way of salvation and put their trust and faith in him, they're not a believer. They're a good theologian, but they're not a believer. These are not one-to-one exchangeable things.

So they're not damned. I would say that if you go back, you can find references to the Arians (back at the Nicene controversy—the losers). They denied the eternality of the Son. They believed there was a time when the Son was not, so they didn't see Jesus as fully God. But, nevertheless, they did see Jesus as the sole means of salvation. And they get referred to as "brethren." I mean, there are places where that happens. They're not considered non-believers. They're considered to have aberrant theology by the decision of the Council. I think we need to remember this and apply it to our own situations.

Somebody might think of 1 John and John's talk about unbelievers not believing "that Christ had come in the flesh." That really isn't about successfully articulating trinitarianism. It's really about rejecting that Jesus was the Christ, the messiah come to deliver Israel. If you look at 1 John 4, for instance, verses 2 and 3. Think about what this says:

²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.

Notice the two polar opposites: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. Then how do you wind up being not from God? It doesn't say that every spirit that does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh is not from God. That isn't what the verse says. It says that every spirit that does not confess *Jesus* is not from God. So John's idea about Christ coming in the flesh is really, ultimately about accepting that Jesus was the messiah—the savior, the one who was sacrificed, who was given by God to take away the sins of the world (John 3:16). If you reject that, then that's not from God. Many Christians who would embrace the exclusivity of the Gospel today wouldn't have a prayer of successfully articulating the subtleties of adoptionism, subordinationism, Eternal Sonship, etc. Hey, when I became a Christian, I didn't

know about any of that! I wouldn't have had a prayer to have an intelligent discussion about any of that. But I understood what the Gospel was and why I needed it and that there was no other way of salvation. I just think we need to keep some of these things in perspective.

So no, they're not damned. I think they're incorrect in their theology, but trinitarianism is not one-to-one interchangeable with embracing the Gospel. It just isn't. That would be the way I approach that whole question.

TS: Kevin in Cambodia wants to know:

What is the best way to answer those who are using verses (primarily in the Old Testament) to support the doctrine of soul sleep?

MH: I would say passages in any Testament (but of course, you're going to have this in the Old) that describe interactions of the dead with other dead or with the living. That's what you need to find and focus on, at least initially... the frequent descriptions. Just think about it. I would ask this question, to be kind of blunt about it: What ancient Near Eastern culture has anything like soul sleep? I don't know of any. Mesopotamia didn't. Egypt didn't. This belief, this position, is not part of the ancient Near Eastern world. It just isn't. And the Bible is part of that world. This belief that when you die, you have some sort of conscious existence with other people (other dead) and that you can interact with the living, this is common. It's ubiquitous in the ancient Near Eastern world.

40:00

Let's just go through some things randomly here in the Old Testament. You have frequent descriptions of dying as being "gathered to one's people" or being "gathered to your fathers." You do get a few "slept with the fathers," but it's a common idea that because of what you look at (a dead body); it's got its eyes closed and looks like it's sleeping, so it's referred to as sleep. But you would bury people with things they would use (or that you thought they would need) in the afterlife. They were going to go to be with their fathers, with their ancestors. Any culture that buries anyone with things of use in life does so because it's expected that they will be using those things in the afterlife. You're not using anything if you're asleep, is the point. This idea is foreign to the ancient Near East. Again, Israel is part of that. Jacob tells his sons, "I'm being gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron, the Hittite." You have this notion that I'm expecting to be with my loved ones after I die. What... you're all going to be like asleep together? How would you even know that you're with your loved ones? If you sort of intellectually figured, "Well, I'll be with my loved ones, but we're all going to be asleep." Really? Is that really what we're talking about here? Archaeological discoveries contradict it quite a bit. Israel is like any of these other cultures: people are buried with things to use and to enjoy in the afterlife. That alone tells you that they don't believe in soul sleep. And it's ubiquitous in the ancient Near Eastern world.

You get other passages: Isaiah 14. Again, this is the hebel passage. I'll just go there, to verse 9:

**⁹Sheol beneath is stirred up
to meet you when you come;
it rouses the shades to greet you...**

Okay, "Well, those are just the non-human spirits." Really? It continues:

**...all who were leaders of the earth;
it raises from their thrones
all who were kings of the nations.**

In other words, this diatribe that has a divine rebellion as the backdrop of it (this is why the king of Babylon is getting painted with this brush—because of his arrogance)... The prophet is basically saying, "Hey, king! You're going to wind up in Sheol and the other kings are going to be there, too. They're going to greet you."

**¹⁰All of them will answer
and say to you:
'You too have become as weak as we!
You have become like us!'**

In other words, they're having a conversation in Sheol. Again, you don't do that when you're asleep. You've got Luke 16. There's a conversation in the afterlife. I realize that's a New Testament one, but you get the same idea. Transfiguration: Moses and Elijah show up. What, did God just wake them up and say, "Wake up, guys! You have to show up on the mountain here and then you can go back to sleep." No, it just doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

How about contact with the dead being forbidden in the Old Testament? I realize a lot of Christians will say that's just demons and spirits. No, actually there is a difference in vocabulary. There are different terms for the human dead and the non-human dead, and you were not supposed to contact either, but specifically think of it this way: it can't be talking about contacting spirits because spirits don't die. When you are forbidden to contact the dead, you are forbidden from contacting the human dead. And prohibitions are not in the Old Testament for things you can't do. They're there for things that you can do and God doesn't want you to do. That's what Old Testament laws are about: don't do this thing. Again, I have a whole paper about Old Testament divination and why these laws exist, so on and so forth. There are good reason for them. God's isn't just a

cosmic kill-joy here. I mean, when you contact something in the spirit world... 1 Samuel 28. It's Samuel! Samuel says, "Why have you disturbed me?" He doesn't say, "Why did you wake me up?" It's an entirely different vocabulary term. "Disturbed" means you irritated me. "You're irritating me, Saul! What's up?" It doesn't say, "Hey, you woke me up, I was sleeping just fine!" This whole idea of contacting the dead is not a reference to non-human spirits because non-human spirits aren't dead. They didn't die. Humans die and become part of the afterlife world, the spiritual world. So if you can contact the human dead, and we know that you can because there's a whole range of other words here (those who know things, knowing spirits... I'm not going to go through the whole range of vocabulary here), but you're prohibited from doing these things because you could do it. There was some solicitation going on here that you shouldn't do that was forbidden by God. God is not in the habit of forbidding you from doing things that are impossible. That's what's called an absurdity. So in view of this worldview, I ask the question again: Where in the ancient Near East do we have soul sleep? And that's your context for the Old Testament.

45:00

I'll throw in one wild card here. In DDD (Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible)... Ted Lewis is an Old Testament scholar who teaches at Johns Hopkins now. He's in the evangelical tradition (I don't know what part of the spectrum he'd put himself on). I've met Ted a few times. He does a lot of good work. His specialty is on the realm of the dead and stuff like that. In DDD, in his entry on the dead, he gets into the question of whether there were sacrifices to the dead or for the dead in Israel. I'm going to just read you part of his article and we'll talk about a few verses as we go, because there are certain indications in the Hebrew Bible that people (Israelites) did bring offerings for the dead. We're not talking about idolatry here. We're talking about bringing the dead certain things, and the belief was that they would enjoy these things in the afterlife. And that wouldn't make any sense if everybody thought they were asleep. So here we go with what Ted writes in part of his article:

Was there a cult of the dead in ancient Israel? The Deuteronomistic legal material in the Hebrew Bible reveals restrictions against consulting the dead (Deut 18:9–11): presumably presenting offerings to the dead (Deut 26:14)...

That's a little more ambiguous. This verse says:

¹⁴ I have not eaten of the tithe while I was mourning, or removed any of it while I was unclean, or offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the LORD my God. I have done according to all that you have commanded me.

So it's apparently a known practice—bringing offerings to the dead. And part of Deuteronomy says, "You really shouldn't do that." There are going to be other passages that aren't quite so negative, but for our purposes here, there's a law

here that alludes to the practice of presenting an offering to the dead. You don't do that if you think they're asleep. Ted continues:

The Deuteronomistic legal material... reveals restrictions against consulting the dead... presumably presenting offerings to the dead... and engaging in certain practices associated with death rituals such as self-laceration (Deut 14:1; but cf. Jer 16:6; 41:5) which seem to have been typical of Canaanite death cult practice. The Holiness Code [in the Torah] also contains categorical prohibitions against people who turn to necromancy and demands the death penalty for any mediums or necromancers (Lev 20:6, 27). From such laws we may safely infer that cults of the dead existed and flourished in ancient Palestine to the extent that they were considered a threat to what eventually emerged as normative Yahwism. This seems to be supported by references to Manasseh's necromancy (2 Kgs 21:6) and Josiah's eradication of it (2 Kgs 23:24) however the Deuteronomist may be using stereotypical lists (or catalogues) of sins and reforms...

Two passages in the Hebrew Bible confirm the existence of the well-known *marzēah* banquet (see above). In Amos 6:7, the *marzēah* banquet is described as revelry without any ties to death cult practices. Yet in Jer 16:5 the *marzēah* has clear funerary connections. The context is one of mourning and bereavement. As with the Ugaritic *mrzḥ*, some scholars see the *raison d'être* for the *marzēah* to be a banquet with the dead. Other scholars describe its primary function to be that of a drinking banquet which could, on occasions, be associated with funerary feasts. Another subject of debate is whether post-interment funerary offerings were presented to the dead in ancient Israel. [MH: This is a little more neutral.] Most scholars see hints of long term offerings of some kind behind such passages as Deut 26:14 ('I have not offered any of it [i.e. sacred food] to the dead') [MH: implying that this was a normative practice]; Ps 106:28...

This passage says this, speaking of Israel:

²⁸ **Then they yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor,
and ate sacrifices offered to the dead;**

Here's the question: Are they condemned for sacrificing to the dead or not? If they're not condemned for sacrificing to the dead, are they condemned for just eating the sacrifices? In other words, which is the crime here—giving sacrifices to the dead or eating the sacrifices? (Taking what should belong to you... "It should belong to the dead, don't eat that stuff! You gave it to your deceased ancestors. It's for them; don't eat it!") What's the penalty? What's the problem? It's not quite clear.

50:00 Isaiah 57:6, 8 says:

**To them [the dead] you have poured out a drink offering,
you have brought a grain offering.**

Does this indicate regret? This might be a little clearer in my head than to readers. Let me just pick up with the context here. Isaiah is talking about a bunch of stuff that they shouldn't do. Talking about idolatry here, and in this context there's going to be a reference to child sacrifice. Let's pick up in verse 5, which is talking about Asherah trees/terabinths (like we talked about in Ezekiel):

**⁵ you who burn with lust among the oaks,
under every green tree,
who slaughter your children in the valleys,
under the clefts of the rocks?
⁶ Among the smooth stones of the valley is your portion;
they, they, are your lot;
to them you have poured out a drink offering,
you have brought a grain offering.
Shall I relent for these things?
⁷ On a high and lofty mountain
you have set your bed,
and there you went up to offer sacrifice.
⁸ Behind the door and the doorpost
you have set up your memorial;
for, deserting me, you have uncovered your bed,
you have gone up to it,
you have made it wide;
and you have made a covenant for yourself with them,
you have loved their bed,
you have looked on nakedness.**

It's clearly an idolatrous context. Then you get this thing about "you're slaughtering your children on the rocks" and there's this line about "you've poured out a drink offering" to them (the children that you've slaughtered) and "you've brought a grain offering." And God asks, "Should I relent for these things?" In other words, "Should I look at that and say, 'Oh well, I'm not going to destroy you now, Israel.'" The point is, should God look at these acts as though the people who sacrificed their children actually still love them or they regret what they did or they want their children to have a positive afterlife? Should God care that people have that emotional response? God says, "I'm not going to care

about that! I'm still going to destroy you because this is idolatry." But the point is, whether it's an idolatrous situation or something that might not be idolatrous (just some sort of memorial kind of thing, something a little more neutral), it really doesn't matter for this question or for our discussion. People did this. Funerary offerings of food and libations of wine and such are well attested in the archaeological data in Israel. Here you have hints of it in the biblical text. People did this. And if they're doing it, it tells you that they're not thinking that everybody's asleep over there. It tells you that they believe (that Israelites believed) that the dead have an awake, animate existence.

So that's the kind of thing that I would bring up to someone who talked about soul sleep. I want to see the ancient Near Eastern material for this idea. I want an explanation for why people don't think they're asleep, because they're doing all this stuff. I want an explanation for why we should have prohibitions against contacting the human dead. Again, to contact the dead means they have to be dead, and non-human spirits don't die. So we're talking about the human dead. I want an explanation for that, and ultimately, that means I need an explanation for why God would put a command in there that can't be done, for me to be thinking seriously about adopting a position like soul sleep. I just don't see it.

TS: All right. Ian from Northern Ireland has two questions. His first one is:

Can Mike speak further on the least talked-about aspect of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit? What role did the Holy Spirit play in the Old Testament? Particularly, what role did the Holy Spirit play in the Divine Council and the fallout from Genesis 6 and Deuteronomy 32?

MH: What role did the Holy Spirit play in... There are whole books on the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, so this is not something that I can just rattle off in a Q&A. I'll tell you, though. I will give Trey something to post on the episode site that is a broad survey of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. But like I said, there are whole books written on this, so this is not an inconsequential question. It's just far too much for a Q&A. If listeners are interested in some books, Christopher Wright has one that I think is called *Knowing the Holy Spirit Through the Old Testament*. There's another guy named Hildebrandt with a book called *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*. I have that one. I don't have Wright's book, but I have this other one. A systematic theology usually has a section on the ministry/role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament in its section about the Holy Spirit. Again, systematic theologies will get you there, too.

55:00

When it comes to Genesis 6 and Deuteronomy 32, on one hand, it kind of depends on what the questioner sort of wants or means here. We aren't told anything specific about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Divine Council or in the actual episode of Genesis 6 or in the actual episode of Deuteronomy 32. Even though there's just nothing there, more obliquely, if you're thinking about the

reversal of Genesis 6 and the reversal of Deuteronomy 32, then we have a different story. Then we can talk about that.

I know I've said it on the podcast a few times, but this whole idea if you ask the average Christian, "Why is the world so messed up?" you'd get one answer: Genesis 3, the Fall. If you asked an Israelite or first-century Jew the same question, you'd get three answers. It wouldn't be Genesis 3. Genesis 3 would be the first of three reasons why humanity is so depraved and why the world is the way it is (alienated from God and hostile to God). You'd get Genesis 3, you'd get Genesis 6, and you'd get the Babel event (Deuteronomy 32 worldview). So the messiah was supposed to reverse all three instead of just one. Again, most Christians are fixated on the messiah being the solution for the Fall. He certainly is, but he's also the solution, in biblical thinking, for the other two. So if you're thinking that way, then the role of the Holy Spirit ought to be clear. Because what's the solution to those things? The Genesis 6 problem is about the proliferation/acceleration of human depravity. And, of course, the Deuteronomy 32/Babel event is about the alienation of the nations out of/away from the people of God. They're outsiders. So the solution to both those things is the Gospel. It's the Kingdom of God. It's being a member of the Kingdom of God, because when someone believes in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes and indwells them. The Holy Spirit, of course, enables them and opens their eyes—all the things we're used to hearing about the Holy Spirit in the New Testament apply to Genesis 6 and Deuteronomy 32. I shouldn't say all of them, but practically all of them, apply to Genesis 6 and Deuteronomy 32. Just because they're found in the New Testament doesn't mean they don't apply to the Old Testament situation.

So the Spirit does lots of things. It's his work in drawing people to the Gospel. It's his work in illuminating their understanding. He's the one who regenerates. He seals. He sanctifies. So the solution to human depravity is the presence of the Holy Spirit to prompt love for God, faith, obedience, so on and so forth. The solution for reclaiming the nations is also the Holy Spirit. Why? The answer to that is belief in the Gospel by Gentiles, who are then grafted into the people of God, and the Holy Spirit does all that. You get baptized into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. That's actually what the baptism of the Holy Spirit is, by the way. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says you're put into the Body of Christ—that's the Holy Spirit. You're sealed—that's the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's involved in all of this. So if you're looking for what the Holy Spirit did at the Genesis 6 event and at the Babel event, I don't know. We're not told, and I'm not going to make something up. If your question is, "What's his role in rectifying those things?" oh, there's a lot that the Holy Spirit is doing! I just gave you the overview. I'll post something a little more broad (just generally) about what the Holy Spirit does in the Old Testament. We'll post that on the page for this episode because, again, that's such a vast subject that you can't really treat it on a podcast.

TS: Ian's second question (and the last question of the episode) is:

In a related matter, there is Matthew 12: Jesus' comment concerning the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. The comment sprang from the Pharisees' questioning Jesus' ability to drive out demons. Are the two related? Why is blaspheming the Holy Spirit beyond forgiveness?

MH: Let me begin this by two sort of summary thoughts or summary ideas, and then I'll unpack these a little bit. In the Gospels, the exorcism of demons (the casting out of demons) is also associated with the presence and the advance of the Kingdom of God (they're two sides of the same coin). In Matthew 12:28, you have this link specifically noted:

²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

1:00:00

That's actually a common idea in the Gospels. When Jesus is casting out demons, it has something to do with the Kingdom of God being present or taking form or advancing. There's a lot of ways to describe that. The second summative thought is that blaspheming the Holy Spirit is assigning the works of God to Satan. That's pretty clear from the passage. That is, by implication, a rejection of the Kingdom of God. If you're assigning the works of God to Satan, then you're assigning God's Kingdom to Satan. You're rejecting the Kingdom of God. Those are two things to have in your head as we discuss this.

For this one, let me just open up with probably my favorite commentary on Matthew by R.T. France. He says:

The saying about an “unforgivable sin” has often been inappropriately, and sometimes disastrously, applied to contexts which have little to do with its original setting. As it appears here in Matthew it is specifically concerned with what the Pharisees have just said. In 9:3 the scribes had accused Jesus of blasphemy; now the charge is returned...

³¹ Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

The opening “therefore” (v. 31) indicates that in this context blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is to be understood in terms of the Pharisees’ charge in v. 24, attributing what is in fact the work of God’s Spirit (v. 28) to his ultimate enemy, Satan. It is thus a complete perversion of spiritual values, revealing a decisive choice of the wrong side in the battle between good and evil, between God and Satan. It is this which has shown these Pharisees to be decisively “against” Jesus (v. 30). And it is this diametrical opposition to the good purpose of God which is ultimately unforgivable... It is beside the point to question whether any worse sin could be imagined; the point is that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit stands out

from the run of “ordinary” sins as being uniquely serious. It is to declare oneself against God. It is to “call evil good and good evil.” (Isa 5:20)

Just getting away from France a little bit, I think it might be helpful to think about this issue in terms of a couple of illustrations that come from the Old Testament. What I have in mind here is the hardening of Pharaoh's heart and (I think importantly) Old Testament laws where there was no provision for forgiveness in the sacrificial system for certain offenses. We went through Leviticus, and you know that (depending on the translation—it's rendered in different ways) there are these sins that are committed with a high hand—these intentional sins. One of them was blasphemy against God. There were no sacrifices to take care of these sorts of sins. There was just the death penalty. In other words, there was nothing you could do to make this go away. If you remember back in our series on Leviticus, there were certain sins like this.

I think that needs to be part of the backdrop with this passage and this whole issue, because if you're thinking about the Old Testament... Think about the language that's used in Matthew: "will not be forgiven." That is the same phrase (except it's negated) that you'll find in the Old Testament about being forgiven. In other words, when the offeror would bring out a sacrifice, Leviticus says ten times or so that "he shall be forgiven." Well, here in this Matthew 12 passage, it's the same phrase but it's negated. So if you're someone like the Pharisees (or the initial readers of Matthew, "the most Jewish Gospel"), when you hear this phrase, I think your mind (and their minds, certainly, because basically the Pharisees have the whole Torah memorized) are going to be taken back to these passages about sacrifices and forgiveness and also the fact that there were certain sins that just didn't have a remedy. It was a death penalty offense. In other words, if you commit this sin, you're done. This is what you did, you're done, there's nothing to do here. The effect of it is going to be eternal because you're going to be dead.

Having said all that, I would say the idea in Matthew 12 with the unpardonable is sort of threefold. Let me give you three thoughts.

1:05:00

1. The phrase "will not be forgiven" draws on Old Testament language about forgiveness in the sacrificial system.
2. When you negate that idea, that is to be understood as a reference to the high-handed, willful sin. In this instance, it's going to be equatable to blasphemy against God himself, but in Matthew 12 specifically, it's rejecting the messiah (who is, of course, God incarnate). That means it's rejecting the salvation of being a member of the Kingdom of God. You reject it by saying, "This person in front of me is empowered by Satan and the kingdom he's talking about is the kingdom of Satan."

3. If this is where a person's heart is, then there's really no sacrifice or atonement for that person. He has been hardened, akin to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

I would say the end of verse 32 is worth noting here. It says:

...whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

I'm going to go back to France here and pick up one statement he has toward the end of his little treatment here. He says:

"This age" and "the age to come" are Jewish terms which apply primarily to the contrast between this life and the next, rather than to successive phases of life on earth... Here, then, the consequences of the unforgivable sin apply not only to this life but also to the life to come, when judgment will have been finally given.

In other words, if you were determined not to believe to the point where you'll call God's kingdom Satan's kingdom and the power of the Spirit the activity of Satan, then your fate is sealed. This is the sin that seals one's fate, not some moral violation. In other words, what's being described here is the full-on rejection of the person of Christ and, therefore, the Gospel. Think of it this way: if you reject the Gospel, where else do you think you're going to go? What else do you think is going to happen? If you reject the Gospel, then you're going to wind up in this life (because this is your state of mind) and in the next life, you'll be in the status of being unforgiven. You will be alienated/separated from God forever.

The way I've articulated that is sort of akin to Hebrews 6 and this idea that "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin" if someone lapses into unbelief and doesn't believe the Gospel. In other words, there's no alternative solution. If someone rejects the work of Christ, there's no other means of salvation. We're done. That doesn't preclude (and I think this is part of the lurking issue behind the question) a change of heart. If one repents and turns to the only means of salvation, realizing there's no other sacrifice for sin, then you're in the status of agreeing with God. You're in the status of accepting God's solution. But since there were Pharisees in the New Testament who later believed (according to the book of Acts), it seems pretty reasonable to me that this is the way to read the language in Matthew 12. And I'll admit, we can't know for sure that the Pharisees who believed later on were present in this scene. But at one point, the Pharisees who were at the crucifixion were pretty much in lock-step rejecting the Gospel (rejecting this person as being the messiah). So if one later on has a change of heart, then Scripture testifies to the fact that they could have a change of heart. If one later denies that the Kingdom of God was the kingdom of Satan... If you deny that later on and affirm that Jesus was the Son of God and he cast out demons through the Holy Spirit (he was what he said he was), then you're

actually embracing his messiahship, which means you're embracing the Gospel, which means you're agreeing with God, which means you have come to salvation. But if you're at this level of hardening, there is nothing else God will present to you for forgiveness.

1:10:00

So if you're in this scene in Matthew 12 and you're looking at Jesus and you're saying, "You're basically another Satan. You're empowered by Satan and your kingdom is Satan's kingdom." If that's where you're at and this person that you're assigning Satanic status to is, in fact, the only way of salvation, you have to be a member of the Kingdom of God—this kingdom you're rejecting and associating with Satan. If that's the situation and you're at this level of hardening, there's nothing else that you can look to for forgiveness. There is nothing else God will present to you for forgiveness. And that's going to have eternal ramifications. So unless you do a complete 180, unless you come to agree with God, if this is where you're at, there's just no other alternative. Your fate/destiny is sealed. And it's in this life because this is your present attitude. And if you don't come to agree with God (remember, there's no other thing to do, there's nothing else that will rectify the situation spiritually, other than for you to agree with God that this is his messiah and this is God's Kingdom that he's representing and it is by the power of God's Spirit that he's doing these things)... Unless you come to that point, you will not have eternal life. There is nothing else there. And so, it's categorical. It has ramifications both for where you're at in this life (in your mind), and if that situation is never rectified and you never come to agree with God, then your fate is also going to be sealed in the life/age to come.

So I think we need to be thinking of Matthew 12 and try to hear it the way the Pharisees would have heard it, taking their minds back to the language of forgiveness in their own sacrificial system, and then negating it, which would, in turn, bring their minds back to the fact that there were unpardonable sins (using our language). There were sins in the Old Testament that had no solution. You were damned if you did this, and so if you're thinking like that and you're hearing what Jesus is saying, that is the ultimatum. Either you believe in this guy and that he is empowered by the Spirit of God and this *is*, in fact, membership in the Kingdom of God being presented to you... If you reject that, you're done. There's nothing else God can do or will do for you.

TS: All right, Mike. Just like that, we're done. Next week we've got an interview coming up.

MH: Yeah, we're going to talk to a friend of mine from graduate school—John Hobbins—who's actually a pastor in Wisconsin now, and Samuel Bray. I've not met Samuel, but I've known John for a number of years. They have produced a new translation of Genesis 1-11 that's being published. It's the first installment of a larger translation project. But we want to talk about not just their translation and what makes it different, but we want to talk about the whole enterprise of translation. I get a lot of questions on different translations and I have to get into

translation technique and what-not, but John has really spent a lot of time... He is multi-lingual. He's spent a lot of time thinking about translation very specifically. I've read the preface to this new translation. I'm not sure if it'll be out by the time the episode airs or not. In any event, this is something he's really been invested in for a number of years. Having read the preface, it's just kind of an interesting perspective/approach that they're taking to translation generally. I don't want to spill too many of the beans, but it's something I think listeners will find interesting—what translators have to think about and why they decided to do certain things that they did in Genesis 1-11. So that's what we're going to talk about next week with John and Sam.

TS: I'm looking forward to that one, Mike! We appreciate you answering our questions, as always. Just want to thank you all for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.