

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 174

Live from Lubbock, Texas

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Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Dr. Heiser answers questions from a live audience. Thank you to Wayland Baptist University for hosting and Nathan for organizing the event. Thank you to everyone who came and joined us in Lubbock, Texas.

Questions asked:

- Did the angels in Revelation 12 understand messiah's purpose and plan? [1:11 time stamp]
- Is there a correlation between the two uses of "dust" in Genesis 3? [4:49]
- Have you read the SBL article you mentioned last year? [9:22]
- Is there a link between Chinese characters and the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview? [10:32]
- Could the angelic fall mentioned in Revelation 12 have happened at an earlier time than at the birth of Christ? [18:07]
- What is your recommended Bible translation? [22:13]
- Why do the signs related to Christ's birth have to be astral prophecy and not just a reference to the prophets? [26:07]
- Is Jude making a connection between the sin in Sodom and Gomorrah and the angelic sin of Genesis 6? [27:58]
- How do we bring up some of the things we've learned from you when we're in a Bible study setting in which people may not be ready? [37:29]
- What are some good resources for understanding logic and coherence to better interpret the Bible? [43:32]
- What are you trying to accomplish with your fiction stories? [46:22]
- Could there have been two things going on in the Sodom/Gomorrah situation—one on the surface and one below the surface? [49:31]
- Are there passages that eliminate the possibility of angelic redemption after they've sinned? [52:47]

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 174: Live from Lubbock, Texas. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, welcome to my college hometown!

MH: Yeah, you've told me that about a dozen times!

TS: The home of champions—just like I am, huh?

MH: [laughing] Of course.

TS: We want to give a quick "thank you" to Nathan for organizing this event and for Wayland Baptist University for hosting the event. We appreciate it. We're back doing another live Q&A, so we're ready for ya'll's questions if ya'll are!

MH: So how are we going to do this? What's the procedure?

TS: Whoever wants to ask a question, raise your hand and Nathan will bring you the mic.

Questioner: I'm Clint, and I'm from Malakoff, Texas.

1:11

In Revelation 12, does the reference to one third of the stars falling to earth indicate that at that time, those angels had enough understanding of the messiah's purpose and attributes to decide they didn't like God's plan, and so they rebelled at that time?

MH: The question, in part, depends on whether you think the angels that are referred to were good guys (you prefaced it by saying they rebelled) or whether they are bad guys already. In other words, what's their state? Let's just read through it a little bit.

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ²She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

The way you worded your question, "Did a third of the angels know enough about the messiah" is the way I think you put it... so that they would rebel? Is that how you framed the question?

Questioner: It's kind of like how you said the gospel was hidden and had to be revealed and if the rulers had known, they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of Glory. That kind of track...

MH: I don't know if we can really read this as a rebellion. You could read it as an attack by the dragon on good-guy angels (if we want to put it that way). So a third of them are defeated or cast to earth. It's conceivable to me that you could read it that way. That question is, in part, related to what comes later:

⁷Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back...

Are we to assume in verse 7 about the dragon and his angels that the "his angels" there are the same that were swept down in verse 4? The way you worded the question assumes that. I don't actually read it that way. I don't think we have to read one particular group between verses 4 and 7. So we don't have to read "angels in rebellion" in verse 4. It could be the terminology of conflict, where you have God's servants—God's side—suffering a defeat of some sort in the conflict. That's the way I tend to read it. That's a long way of saying, "no, I wouldn't go that direction with it." But you could. If you did, you would say this was sort of a seduction of a third of the angels. The "swept down" is really that a third of the angels were convinced to join the side of the dragon. I think it's reading a lot into the passage to fill that gap... "What convinced them? Well, it was this messiah about to be born. Well, why would that have bothered them?" You can read it that way, but for my taste it requires a little bit too much front-loading of that kind of information to read the passage that way. If you have answers that satisfy yourself as far as answering those questions, you wouldn't be alone reading it that way. I don't, and I don't think you have to.

Questioner: Robert from Hobbs, New Mexico.

4:49

In Genesis 3:14, where it reads:

**¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent,
"Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat**

all the days of your life.

In reference to verse 19, where he's telling Adam now:

¹⁹ **By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return."**

Do those two words for the dust that the serpent is going to eat and the dust that man is going to turn into... Is that the same word? Is there any correlation between those two words?

MH: We could look it up right here. So the one verse was verse 14. Right here is "dust." That's afar in Hebrew. And then down to verse 19... same word. So yes, they're the same word. Is there something you wanted to build on that?

Questioner: I guess the second part of that is, are we going to be ingested by this entity/being when we return to the dust if our corporeal bodies are going to be there?

MH: In *Unseen Realm*, I talk a little bit about this particular passage. I take the language here... Since I don't take the *nachash* (serpent) as being only a member of the animal kingdom—I take the *nachash* as a divine being in rebellion. Depending on how you take the term, it could be a divine being that manifests itself in this way. This is very common. Guys like Walton and others have discussed at length that it's common in ancient Near Eastern literature to have divine communication happen through animals. Everybody knows that animals don't really talk. If we run into a talking snake, like in the tale from Egypt, everybody knows that's a divine being because snakes don't normally talk. I think there's certainly a lot to be said for that here. In *Unseen Realm*, I talk about *nachash*. If it's a noun, it's actually *ha-nachash*, so it's the word plus the definite article. If it's a noun, then you can legitimately translate it as "serpent." If it's a participle—a verb from the same root—then it would be the one who dispenses divine information, the one who gives divinatory knowledge. That's certainly in play here, too. If it's an adjective that's substantivized through the article, then it means "the shining one," which is a stock description for divine beings. In *Unseen Realm*, I talk about all three of those. I think the readers are really led to think all three of those things, not just one. Since I take it as a divine being having a conversation in Eden... Eden is the divine abode, the cosmic mountain,

the abode of the Divine Council in ancient Near Eastern thinking—gardens and mountains. Eden is referred to both ways in the Old Testament. Since I look at the passage that way, I take what is said in the judgment terms to this "animal"—to the serpent—I take it metaphorically because of what is done to the serpent. The serpent is cast down to *eretz*—to the ground. Yeah, it's "ground," but *eretz* is also one word that can mean "Sheol." There's a reference in Isaiah 14 and there's a passage in Jonah that clearly uses the term for Sheol.

So I think the point of the cursing language is that "you wanted to be above the Most High (Isaiah 14), but now I'm going to put you below or put you underneath all of the animals of the earth." In other words, "you're going to be down in the realm of the dead—the underworld." So I take the curse as metaphorical, and since I do that for the serpent, I don't think we have a literal "we die and we return to the dust and then the serpent eats us" kind of literalism going on. I would tend to not read it that way for those reasons.

Questioner: My name's Nathan.

MH: Yes, this is Nathan, the organizer.

Questioner: My name's Nathan and I'm here in Lubbock. I've actually got two questions, if you don't mind.

9:22

In the San Antonio live Q&A with David Burnett, you had mentioned an article coming out about Romans 1 and how it all ties in to Genesis 3 and Genesis 6 and Genesis 11 and how Paul is kind of weaving all three threads into that short little deal of Romans 1. You said you were skeptical, but I was just curious about whether you've had a chance to read it and what your thoughts are on it.

MH: He has not produced the article itself yet. This is not Burnett, this is the person Burnett and I were talking to. That was a conference paper. We talked to him afterwards. He didn't want to give me the article then because he thought... He didn't use these terms, but typically when grad students don't want to give you their conference papers it's because they think it's still half-baked. They often read papers at SBL to get feedback like, "Okay, what am I missing here? Am I going off in la-la land? Somebody tell me." So he didn't want to give me the paper. He said he was going to keep working on it and possibly submit it for publication, but he has not done that. So I haven't read it.

Questioner: Roger that. My second question was:

10:32

Remember back in March or April, you had your guys on Faithlife defending you and the book from heresy when Lexham released it for two weeks on a 45-day reading plan?

MH: Are you talking about the online forum?

Questioner: Yes, sir.

MH: I can't claim to know or recall who those guys were, but I know there were people jumping in there.

Questioner: Yes, sir. On one of the threads, there was a missionary who got to talking about how in the ancient original Chinese, the character for "righteousness" is a man with a lamb over his shoulders and a tree, and the word for "prohibit" is two trees in a garden, and things of that nature. That got tied into a conversation about Acts 17. I was just curious about how to parse the disinheritance of Babel and Acts 17 with 1 Timothy 4:10, which says:

¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

What do we do with that?

MH: Let's go back to the Chinese thing. I don't know Chinese, so I can't really evaluate that. I can tell you what I would want to see to think that there's any significance between the biblical story and the Chinese character. I don't think, generally (and I'm not saying the source would say this, either), that a claim like, "the Chinese character-based language is based on Christian theology or the Bible" or anything like that. So let's wipe that off the table. What I would want to know is whether this character was introduced in a post-Christian era. Chinese has lots of characters. If the character was introduced well before the Christian era, then I would say that you don't have a Christian connection. If it was introduced afterwards, maybe there's something to that. I don't know. I don't know either the historical question or Chinese in terms of characters to be able to answer that. I'm just telling you, that's what I would want to know right off the bat.

Does that have anything to do with the Deuteronomy 32 worldview? How do we parse something like that? On the one hand, if the character is post-Christian, that sort of answers that question. There might have been some Christian influence there and then somebody could have invented a character to convey a specific concept based upon something maybe a missionary taught. Who knows? That's one trajectory. Since we don't have a clear picture of what you described in the character even in the Old Testament, I doubt that the Chinese got a clearer picture than the Israelites did, so I don't think we can really track fruitfully on that trajectory.

15:00

If the question is about how the nations were saved—how they were made acceptable to God and that sort of thing—my paradigm for this is that this is ultimately for God to decide. God provides information to whomever he wills. If this is outside the believing community (in other words, what God considers his family—Israelites, and now the Church—the circumcision-neutral thing we call the Church)... Prior to the time where there was a gospel to give to people, could people be rightly related to Yahweh? Sure, they could. We see that in the Old Testament. We see it with Naaman the leper and how Jesus holds him up as an example of faith. For those of you who have listened to the podcast, we had Gerald McDermott on a few months ago and we specifically talked about what the church fathers did—how they debated and talked about what we call the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview. Jerry seemed to think that the faith of a pagan Gentile was somehow not salvific. I don't know if listeners caught that. I might have read him wrong or heard something there that he wouldn't have intended, but I got that impression. I don't take that view. I think that when Jesus recommended Naaman as an example of faith, if he's good enough for Jesus, he's good enough for me. In other words, he responds correctly—he responds well—to the information he had, and he had one thing: "I know now that Yahweh is the God of gods." Period. That just settles the question. His faith is in the God of Israel. He's never going to learn the Torah. He's never going to learn the Jewish Festivals. He's going to go back to Syria. He'll never do anything in the temple. He'll never eat a Passover meal. He'll never do any of that. But he *knows* who the God of gods is.

In this Deuteronomy 32 context—and I would say just generally, in the Old Testament—that is what salvation is about. How is an Israelite saved prior to the cross and, frankly, prior to progressive revelation about the plan of salvation? They're saved if they believe that Yahweh is the God of all gods. Is Yahweh who he says he is? And if he is, we believe that the God of gods entered into a covenant relationship with us and we worship only him—that's what we do. We do what he tells us to do. We believe what he tells us to believe about himself and we do what he tells us to do, and we don't worship another god. It's that simple. And Naaman falls within that.

I'm of the view (this is going to sound a little goofy and I'll try not to chuckle with it) that God still treats unbelieving people today like he treated unbelieving Gentiles in the Old Testament. In other words, they're still not in the family of God. They're still outsiders, as opposed to insiders. So it's up to God to give them information about who he is and about what he wants, whether that includes the gospel or not. If they respond correctly to that the way Naaman did (and there are other examples besides Naaman), then it's up to God to accept that person or not, or give them more information or something like that. In other words, that is above my pay grade. I am not going to presume that I can answer that question for God. If I get to heaven some day and find out some guy in China is there because he just believed that Yahweh was the God of gods and that's all he knew... If he's there, I'm happy, and I won't think God blundered or

committed a theological error. That's kind of the way I look at these sorts of questions. I don't feel either capable of thinking for God on such matters, nor do I think that I'm tasked with deciding that.

Questioner: This is Forrest from Amarillo.

MH: [laughing] No, it's not! He whose name shall not be mentioned...

18:07

Questioner: Going back to the first question regarding the third of the angels that fell... When John is writing that, it seems like he's kind of chronologically jumping around a bit. He kind of goes from the birth right to the death and ascension pretty quickly. Is it possible that the fall that he's talking about happened at a much earlier time? Because when the shepherds witnessed the angels at the birth of Christ, there's no hint of any kind of major battle going on, unless that's the "after party"—I don't know. Is it possible that happened earlier?

MH: If we're saying that with God, time doesn't mean anything and all this chronological talk is really meaningless to God... If you're going to look at it that way, sure, it's possible. I don't read it that way. I don't think we have to have the same elements in every passage when a passage is about the same topic. So it doesn't bother me that the passage with the angels doesn't have this element in it. And Revelation 12 doesn't say anything about shepherds, either. I don't have to have all of the elements in both passages for them to be about the same thing.

You have these scenes in Scripture where they try to encapsulate a bunch of ideas in a very short amount of space. We even have this like in 1 Timothy in one of the passages that is considered a creedal statement: "Christ was risen from the dead, seen by angels..." and you have this whole list of things that aren't precisely in the right chronological order, in the sense that something is omitted that you would expect to be there. But it's considered to be an encapsulated form of the gospel. You have a handful of these in the New Testament. They're not always the same, but they're still essentially talking about the work of Christ. I'm okay with that. I don't think they had to pass notes around... "If you include a creedal statement, make sure it's got these five things in there!" I think they're just encapsulating things as it occurs to them to do it.

That's essentially how I look at what John is doing here. He goes from the birth to the woman being pursued. If you look at the woman as Israel (that's the way I take it, as lots of scholars do), it's not a specific reference to Mary, but it's Israel. Israel is the woman—God's bride—who gives birth to the messiah, then it would refer to the persecution of that community—either the Jews or the believing community that ensued, that was connected with the messiah under Roman persecution or something like that. I'm just not troubled by not having the kind of full description in all of the passages that we might want, because I still kind of know what the topic is about and I know how the elements are relevant to the

topic. I don't look for something exhaustive. I don't know that you'd ever really find it. If you take what's being said out of a first-century context, either abstractly like "this is something that was in the mind of God and then angels knew that it was going to be in the mind of God, it was in God's plan at some point to birth the king/messiah, and then the forces of darkness wanted to oppose that"... In other words, if you take it out of the first century and abstract it like that, then by definition the time doesn't matter. So you could say things like that if you did that.

Questioner: This is Rob from Hobbs with a follow-up question:

22:13

In choosing a Bible version, is there a version that you recommend?

MH: I always recommend that the best Bible to use is the one you'll actually read. [laughter] I always recommend that people have one kind of translation that sort of reflects the two major approaches to translation. There are two schools of thought when you have translation projects. One is referred to as "formal equivalence," in which the translation team feels that its task is to look at the original text and then in the target language account for each word as much as possible from the original language to the target language. We refer to this as "literalism," but it's really about word-for-word correspondence. No translation does that perfectly. Even the King James, which is very literal and very much a formal equivalent with word-for-word correspondence, will say in John 2, "Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?'" Literally in Greek, it's "What to you to me?" That's literally what's there. Those are the only words that are there. So even something that tries to do word-for-word correspondence can't get away from having to try to explain that a little bit.

The other school of thought is what is called "dynamic equivalence." There, the goal is not word-for-word correspondence, it's thought-for-thought. So we look at the original language and ask, "What is the thought that they're trying to convey?" And then when we put it in the target language we can use whatever words we want to capture the same thought. All English Bibles will tell you in the preface what approach they took. My advice is always to use one of each, just so that you can kind of get a feel for how each approach would account for what they're seeing in the text. You're always wiser to use more than one translation. If there ever really is a significant translation "problem," where there's a real elasticity to what something could mean or if there's a manuscript difference... This is what's great about software is you can do this in a couple seconds. You can look at four or five translations, and if they all differ at some point or there's a specific word difference, then you know there's an issue there. That's where you should drill down and get another tool to study that.

25:00

Just generally, apart from that, try to get one that's word-for-word correspondence and one that's thought-for-thought and use them both. I should add that in the first category (that's mostly trying to strike formal equivalence), I

prefer the ESV for only one significant reason, and that is that it's more textually up-to-date in places than other translations are. The big one is Deuteronomy 32. There are several places there where the ESV committee decided to use Dead Sea Scroll material in the running text, not just put it in a footnote. I think we ought to be doing more of that. ESV decided to do that at certain point, and I give them a thumbs-up for that. I like that. I just got into it for that reason and it's sort of grown on me, but I'd use other ones, too.

Questioner: I'm Michael from Lubbock.

26:07

My question relates to your "astral prophecy" comments. Maybe I'm reading into your designation of this in Matthew 4 at the birth of Jesus. The September 11...

MH: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Questioner: Okay. How is that more related to this idea of the signs in the skies than, for instance, that maybe Matthew is just using Isaiah 7, which has a much longer historical tradition in the history of the Christian Church, that we have thought more likely that this is the sign of Emmanuel than it is some sort of an astrological sign. Does that make sense?

MH: Yeah. I would say the answer is a both/and, not an either/or. I don't think we have to pick. John focuses on this or that aspect of the birth. We have the birth of a divine king, he wants to try to communicate the idea (I think in concert with Paul) that people could have known a divine king was born. They're not going to get the gospel out of that, but they know that we had a significant event here. It's also not a fulfillment of prophecy, it's a looking-back hindsight kind of thing. So that doesn't exclude Matthew's description of what's going on there as drawing on Isaiah chapter 7. I think he does see an analogy pretty clearly with Isaiah 7 and also Hosea 11 ("out of Egypt I have called my son"). It's not to exclude the Old Testament. I think different writers introduce different ways of looking at the event for their audience. I would be an inclusive guy when it comes to that, not "it's this, not that" sort of approach.

Questioner: This is Cletus from Amarillo again.

MH: [laughs]

27:58

Questioner: I've got a question regarding Jude. I know you've probably answered this, but when Jude is talking about the angels that have been chained in gloomy darkness, etc., and then he makes the analogy to Sodom and Gomorrah and their immorality. Is there some kind of connection between Sodom and Gomorrah and angelic sexual intercourse? Is that why the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were trying to beat on Lot's

door to have their way with those men—because they recognized them as being angelic?

MH: What you're really asking is, "Are comments like 'going after strange flesh' not about homosexuality but actually a reference to this Genesis 6 kind of stuff?" Is that what you're asking?

Questioner: Well, that seems to be what Jude is alluding to there.

30:00

MH: The short answer is, yeah, you can read it that way. This paper that Nathan brought up in his question—that was one of the trajectories of that paper, which is why I was interested in it. The guy was basically making the argument that this is sort of a literary motif and you see the Genesis 6 kind of thing sort of echo in other passages, including the Genesis 19 episode here in Jude. What he was interested in tracking on was whether this was what was behind Romans 1 in Paul. In other words, what this guy was trying to do in the paper was argue that this is a literary pattern and a conceptual pattern where these things are associated together, and then once establishing that idea, going back to Romans 1 and arguing that this is really what Paul was discussing there—and not necessarily homosexuality in that particular passage. As Nathan suggested, I'm aware that people do that and read it that way in Jude and those associated passages. I am still (because I haven't looked at the guy's textual work) a little skeptical. To me, the verdict is out as to whether you can take that to Romans 1. If it just relates to Sodom and Gomorrah, that idea/approach does have a pretty solid history in scholarship. You can read it that way. Some people would say that just helps me make the point about the Genesis 6 stuff and what-not, and I guess it would on that point. I try not to do too much thinking for biblical characters and writers because, while I could probably come up with a good case at the end of the day, I don't really know. In other words, can I really get inside the heads of the men of Sodom and say that they knew these guys were angels and that's why they want them? I don't know if I can really say that from Genesis. You go back and read the story... how would they know that they're angels? I realize that's a little different than the way the writer is crafting things, because maybe the writer *does* want us to think of Genesis 6. To me, I think that's possible. But I think there would be a better case to be made if there was actually something in the narrative about the two men that would sort of take you in that direction, as well.

Questioner: It seems like they must have been somehow markedly different because even Lot recognized them as being different as they were coming in the gate. And then clearly rumor had swirled around the town that these different kind of guys...

MH: Why do you think Lot recognized them as different?

Questioner: Either because God wanted him to or visually they were different.

MH: Both of those thoughts could be "thought coherently think" about. I just don't know where you're going to get them from the text. In other words, somebody could turn that around and say, "Well, it was news to have visitors in town... 'Hey, we've got some visitors in town. They're kind of good-looking, too.'"

Questioner: It was in the local Gazette, you know...

MH: Since we don't know the circumstances of that event (and since I could argue the view you're articulating pretty well and I could also argue some other view pretty well, too), I don't really know which one is correct at the end of the day. I wasn't there and there's really nothing that I can see in the text that really makes one more likely than the other. To me, it's kind of a stalemate. Now, if this guy who's doing the paper comes up with all sorts of Second Temple and other external material that shows that this is really a distinct pattern (that this just shows up in other places a lot), that could tip me. I view the biblical writers as solidly in these streams of tradition. In other words, they're not just lone wolves writing stuff because they're bored. They're writing something intelligently as part of a reasonably learned part of their culture. They can produce books. I view them as literate. I view them as knowing what they're doing intentionally. So if I see evidence for a motif like that that they should have known about—if they're literate people they would have run across this because it's in popular texts or something like that—that's going to influence the way I look at it. But I don't have that in the can right now, so I'm still kind of stuck where I'm at.

Questioner: Is this a potential point for a postdiluvian angelic incursion? You said about the four Apkallu being two-thirds human, so I assume the other three were full deity?

MH: We don't have textual remains for the other three in the Mesopotamian stuff.

Questioner: But if this holds weight like we're talking about... I think a lot of people think that because of what happened to the angels being sent to Tartarus, that was an incentive for other angels not to do this later, but it sounds like it's possible. We're not directly told, but it seems like they're potentially...

MH: I was Gandalf earlier, so now I'll be an angel. If I were an intelligent being and I looked at what happened here, yeah, I would probably think, "That was a bad idea. Probably not a good idea to make God mad. I'd rather live *here* than over there." But at the end of the day, you have statements in Job about God not trusting his holy ones. He says that two or three times. So does that statement mean something sort of neutral like, "God kind of knows what he's getting. He knows they're not infallible, and he sort of knows what he's dealing with here. He's not going to expect perfection." Is that really what it means? Or is it a little darker than that, in that we should read a statement like that and think, "Okay, God knows that they're not infallible, but given that, maybe we're

35:00

supposed to take that statement about God and the way he looks at them and maybe we are supposed to conclude that they might just be willful enough to rebel in the future." I don't personally see anything in scripture that tells me that divine beings can no longer rebel. That's an assumption.

Questioner: In Psalm 82, you said that when he gave them the nations, he basically showed up to them later and said, "You've done a horrible job." So I assume that he would give people the [entities] that he trusted, like "You're my top guy. You're going to run this place."

MH: Right. They're either inept or corrupt or both. That's another good example where I just don't see any... The way we're taught in Christian circles about angelology is that we have the Fall and then everything is just decided. Nobody can move. There can't be any more rebellions. Everything's just sort of set in stone now. Those are all assumptions. I think you do have a good contrary example there with Psalm 82. I don't know if Genesis 19 is one of those because the angels aren't the ones who are rebelling in that passage anyway, so it's a little bit different. But you get these sorts of episodes, and I'm very willing to think that God knows that "Since they are not me, they could mess up. They could rebel. They could make a mistake." If we can't say that about them, then why aren't we calling them "God" with a capital "G?" It just doesn't make sense to me, but that's the way we're sort of reflexively taught angelology and demonology in a Christian context. I think those are weak points because they're guesses. At the end of the day, that's what they are.

Questioner: Clint from Malakoff, again.

37:29

I attend a Bible Church with a very literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Until a month ago, I was right there with them on everything, and then your book just kinda... [pause, laughter] ruined everything for me.

MH: Great! I get blamed again! Trey can edit that out.

Questioner: **My question is... this is so radical. We're starting a study September 10 on 1 Peter, so right out of the gate we're going to run into stuff that ties into Enoch. We run into verse 12, which mentions that the angels want to look into some things.**

MH: Who is "we?" Is this your church?

Questioner: Our church. We have a Sunday morning Bible study and it's just all the adults together. So we're going to be in 1 Peter, and you've got Enoch that needs to be brought into the context. And you've got in verse 12, you can already see...

MH: [laughing] Good luck with that!

Questioner: In verse 12, you see where it's talking about how even the angels long to look into these things. I could camp there for two or three Sundays in a row, just unpacking that. But even bringing Enoch up might be an uproar for these people. They're my family and I love them. **How can I, as just an attendee of that class, bring things up in a thoughtful way so as to not cause someone to stumble or look at me as a heretic?**

MH: Right. [sigh] You should not feel guilty over not telling people all of the things you know or would like them to think about. That's the first bridge to cross. In other words, you dumping exhaustive knowledge on them is not a moral issue. If you understand their context, it's a good bet that God does, too. I think you do need to be cautious. You need to be loving. There will be times that you would be wiser to just not say anything. Other times, you're going to have to know your people as to whether you can interject this or that. I think what would be a moral issue is if you pretend that there's nothing to see here, so move along, and you just do things that way. Ultimately, you have to know your audience.

I have found that if you can introduce people to new things like this in a problem-solving way... In other words, "We're going to talk about something now, and it helps solve this problem of interpretation." Maybe it's that unbelievers would think this is a contradiction. In other words, it helps them come away from the discussion feeling good about scripture, feeling affirmed in some particular point. You've helped them to defend something they do believe and they know well, using this point of information. If you do that a few times, it builds trust, it's constructive for them. I would say if you can do that kind of thing with the content—solve a problem for them, build up their faith—you're wise to do that. This is why I don't go into churches on Sunday mornings. I've had people say, "Can you come Sunday and do this?" And it's like, "No, no, no, no, no... All that's going to do is create a problem for you. I'm just going to leave and then you're stuck with the problem. We're not going to do that." So I'll do things like Two Powers stuff—the Godhead in the Old Testament—because that affirms a Trinitarian belief system for them from their Old Testament. People love that! It's scholarship given to the person in the pew, but it's very constructive. I'll do something on what an imager is—the whole concept of imaging God. The image of God isn't something plopped into us, it's a status we have. And I may throw in a little Hebrew grammar there because it has a basis. I'm not just making it up, it has a basis. Nobody's going to remember that, but it's good for them to hear it because they know it's Dr. Mike and he does Hebrew and he read this somewhere that somebody else said this who knows Hebrew, too. And that's good enough. It's a constructive sort of thing to do, rather than just going in there and creating the impression that I'm going to be novel today and you have to listen to me because I have a PhD. There's just no point to that.

So my advice would be to try to anticipate some questions that people would normally have about the passage, and then if you can introduce elements of this

"new stuff" to them that helps address those questions, that would be really helpful. But you're still going to have to pick your spots. 1 Peter is pretty thorny in this regard, but I wouldn't just go in there and dump a whole lot of stuff on them. There are people who will be patient. I've found, just with books and stuff, there are people who will be patient and will read the book and they'll come out okay. There are a lot of other people who won't have any patience at all for it. You could have a month with them and they're not going to listen to it at all. You're never going to be able to perfectly navigate that, but you want to try up-front to be constructive about it and not pick fights. Do what you can to get them interested in scripture. That's a big hurdle. Once you give them reasons to be interested, they'll come back to you and want more. Again, you build up a little trust there, so then you can progressively unfold things. But don't just go in there and dump on them. It'll just be counterproductive.

Questioner: Kenneth from Fort Polk.

43:32 **What are some good resources for understanding logic and coherence to better interpret the Bible?**

MH: Oh, boy. How about a good dose of listening to graduate student papers? [laughter] That's really a good question. I don't know that I have a good answer for that. I don't know that you can... I know you can, to some degree. I was going to say that I don't know that you can teach clear thinking. If it were me—if I were forced to give an answer to this—I would say to go get a homeschool middle school or high school curriculum book on logic. Or get something at that level on logical fallacies, and then try to teach people the categories. Then illustrate all those things, not just from the book examples that the textbook would give you, but even in things like Bible interpretation. I would say there's enough of them out there that you don't have to name people or preachers or whatever. You just use the problem that you have come across and help them think through a passage. You can teach the difference between correlation and causation... "These two things are like each other so one must have caused the other." Really? It's a logical blunder and a fallacy that happens all the time—not just in novice Bible studies, but I could show you that kind of stuff in a graduate student paper or even a journal article. I actually said this one time in a graduate/doctoral seminar. I said out loud in what must have been a moment of weakness (or stupidity) that I thought we would all be better off as graduate students if we were forced to take a course on logic. I didn't win hearts and minds that day! [laughing] But I was serious about it. You just run into this. I think that would be a good start, but I don't know of anything you can just read or study that will flip the switch on. You more or less have to know what the categories are and then see a good dose of poor thinking and have somebody really guide you through that, so that people have their senses exercised to seeing that sort of stuff. Or if you can take what the textbook offers you and then reduce it to a set of questions you should ask about every interpretation. Again, it's the logical fallacy stuff—just to try to weed it out like that.

46:22

Questioner: A slightly different question... You've written *The Facade* and *The Portent*. What are you trying to accomplish with stories and why are stories important?

MH: I like to try to piggy-back theology on fiction. In the case of *The Facade* and *The Portent*, it's science fiction (you could also call it paranormal fiction). I do that because there's a general utility about it. You can illustrate certain things if it's put in a scene or an episode in a book, just broadly speaking.

There's another purpose in it, and that is that people who are outside the Church (and I don't mean only those who are estranged from it, I mean people who have no context or no interest for Bible/Christian stuff)—you can often get them to the table to at least have a conversation if you do through something like a novel or fiction. It's why I do New Age interview shows. It's why I was on with the guy who's the pagan who lives in PA. (I've been on his show twice.) Those people will never darken the door of a church or anything remotely Christian, but if you get invited to do that it just presents an opportunity.

So I view fiction as just another opportunity to get people who otherwise would not get any exposure at all. Why do I do Ancient Astronaut stuff and that kind of thing online? It's for the same reason. I don't like the Bible or any primary text abused in such discussions. There are lots of caricatures about the Bible in these shows and on these websites, and there ought to be somebody out there saying, "Well, you might want to think a little bit differently—not only about this topic but also about the way the Bible is used for this topic." So I'll do Coast to Coast and these kinds of shows. That's really why I do it. There's really no other reason to do it. A lot of people think that you go on a show like Coast to Coast and you sell lots of books. I don't. I've been on the show over 30 times and I've probably sold a couple hundred books in all those appearances because most of the audience is going to be hostile, and I know that going in. I do it so that they get to hear a Christian voice that not only isn't the "lunatic caricature" that they have of Christians, but also to disabuse them of the notion that they're thinking well about the Bible. If I can do those two things, it was a good visit—it was a good show. Ultimately, I don't know unless I get an email from somebody afterwards. Maybe I could do better things with my time. I just don't know. I do them because I'm asked.

Questioner: This is Nathan again, returning to the Romans 1 thing and what Chandler from Amarillo was talking about...

MH: He changed his name again! [laughter] You've become a meme! [more laughter]

49:31

Questioner: I recognize that we are purely speculating on a paper that no one has ever read, but you were talking about the "strange flesh" and he asked a question about Sodom and Gomorrah.

I'm wondering if maybe there isn't some Hebrew poetry going on where it might be a both/and kind of thing? Could it be one on the surface and something below the surface simultaneously going on? What I'm thinking of is along the lines of 1 Enoch 9:9. Nickelsburg says they taught "hate-producing charms," and the word there for those hate-producing charms is extremely sexually lewd in its nature. You compare that to the pottery that we have—to keep this clean for anyone who is listening around family—with an extremely excited Pan chasing after a soldier. You have Zeus sodomizing a gentleman who's holding a phallic object in his hand. And so I'm just wondering if it might be a both/and thing, rather than one or the other.

MH: I think—pardon the pun because it would be a really bad pun—that the conceptual connection is that since homosexual behavior in general was viewed as contrary to creation order, therefore it would also be associated with the forces of chaos. Ultimately, you're going back to episodes like this. The transgression of heaven and earth is a chaotic thing—it messes with God's order. So this is the same kind of thinking. I think on that level, sure—they're kind of going to put those things in the same bucket, but the bucket might have lots of compartments. I'm interested in there being a discernable pattern. I like patterns in ancient texts.

Again, if he ever produces the paper (Burnett and I are actually going to hunt him down in November because he's Burnett's friend, so we'll corner him at some point)... I'll try to extract either the paper or maybe an interview out of him to try to see what he's actually using for the idea. I'm familiar enough with the idea. I just want to know what material he's using—what are you working with, what are you tracking on? I want the raw ingredients—the primary text source references. If I can get those, then I can run the rabbit trail myself. I may not do as good of a job as this guy has because his head has been in it for a while. He's doing it for something—I don't know if it's his dissertation or not. I would just need to sort of retrace those steps to say any more. But on a theological/worldview level, yeah—it's all going to be contrary to divine order, which is chaos. Things aren't running the way God wants them to run.

Questioner: My last question of the evening...

52:47

Bearing in mind that I've read both of your most recent articles on angelic redemption after the most recent "Fern and Audrey" episode, so no need to recreate the wheel there about how the angels of the churches are more human than they are angelic in how they're described in the letters to the seven churches. Is there a specific verse or verses—or ideas—that you're

tracking on that overtly forbid the notion of angelic redemption—where if you screw up, you're done?

MH: To me, the big trajectory is the link between the atonement and the incarnation. Since we've landed in the book of Hebrews now on the podcast, we'll be getting into that—really early, actually, in the opening chapters of Hebrews. If it was necessary in God's plan for the second Person of the Godhead to become a man to effect redemption, that tells me that humans are the target of redemption. I think that link is what suggests to me... It provides a logic for why there's no clear statement *positively* about angelic redemption. You get negatives, for sure, but you don't get positives. People will say, "The positive might still be out there. We can't take these other statements as being sort of dual-purpose statements." Well, okay. But this link creates a logic for why that situation is what it is. That, to me, is the foundation to the argument against...

Questioner: So there is no atonement for them—they must remain holy, essentially?

MH: Those that are in rebellion would not get the opportunity to change that circumstance. They don't get a chance to have their sins forgiven and covered, or whatever language you want to use. For me, the big trajectory there is the link between the saving work of Christ and the incarnation—becoming a man, as opposed to becoming something else. That, for me, is kind of an orienting point. We'll say more about it as we get into Hebrews in the podcast.

Questioner: Yes, sir. Thank you.

TS: We appreciate it, again... we want to give thanks to Nathan for organizing this event and to Wayland Baptist University for hosting it. Thank you all very much, and thank you all for coming out, and thank you, Mike, for answering our questions, as always. We appreciate it—a full day of listening to Mike. I'm sure everybody would agree with me that we could listen all day. We appreciate his efforts. With that, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.