

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 189

Live from Boston

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Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Guest: David Burnett (DB)

Dr. Heiser and special guest David Burnett answer questions from a live audience. Thank you to everyone who came and joined us in Boston, Massachusetts.

- Soul-sleep (2:53)
- The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (15:18)
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Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 189: Live Q&A from Boston. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser, with David Burnett, who's also...

MH: He's a scholar. [laughter]

TS: So we want to thank everybody for coming out tonight. It's a second live Q&A show, and we have another good turnout. That means lots of questions from you all—I'm sure everybody has questions, right?

[laughter]

MH: Questions about my dog *are* acceptable.

[laughter]

TS: Well, we want to briefly go around the room and introduce people, starting with Brad.

Brad: Hey, I'm Brad. I'm from Plainfield, MA. I guess, why a pug?

MH: Why a pug? Because pugs are awesome. No, I've wanted a pug for years. And it was finally my turn to pick the dog. So I got my way.

Brad: Alright. I've got a bichon. I'm a bichon fan.

MH: So you kind of understand. You just get attached, and there you go.

DB: I always thought it was because of the UFO stuff, and *Men In Black*.

MH: No, no, well, [laughs] that did play a part.

[laughter]

MH: Where are you from?

Dan: I'm Dan. I'm from Westminster, MA. My question this evening: Being raised in a pseudo-Christian system, I was always taught soul sleep, and the proof text was always Ecclesiastes 9. When I'm witnessing to family members, how do I... what's the best route to refute that?

MH: Let's finish going around, and then we'll start with that.

Adam: I'm Adam from Lunenburg, MA.

Mike: Hi, I'm Mike, this is Nicole, my wife, and we're from Brockton, MA.

Mike: I'm Mike, too. I'm Mike Chu. I'm from Quincy, MA.

Ken: I'm Ken from Walden, MA.

April: April from Walden, MA.

TS: Trey from New Orleans, LA.

MH: How did *you* get here?

[laughter]

Brittney: I'm Brittney from Falmouth, MA.

Michelle: I'm Michelle, and I'm from Falmouth, MA.

Rita: I'm Rita and I live in Boston.

Ally: I'm Ally from New Bedford, MA.

2:53 **MH:** Alright, so the soul sleep question. I'll answer that this way. Here's why it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. Couple of quick reasons: You have scenes in scripture where you have these post-death or resurrective appearances, where you have people that were from the Old Testament era that are deceased, and yet they have conversations. There are things like that that happen. You have I Samuel 28:13. I suppose someone could say, "Well, they woke Samuel up so that he could have the conversation," but that doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me because scenes like that are really frequent in ancient Near Eastern material that are not models, but very close parallels to those sorts of things, and you don't have a soul sleep situation there. Another issue would be this whole idea of, "I'm going to go meet my fathers," or "I'm going to go be buried with my fathers," and on the surface, that might not sound like much of anything, but archeologically speaking, when Israelite graves, just like most other graves, are discovered, you'll have grave goods—things that the people burying the deceased person expects and anticipates, imagines that person will use in the afterlife. This is very common in Israelite burials. So if this is what they believe, that you die and then you're asleep and you really don't have any sort of conscious existence or however you want to describe that, on the other side, why would they do that? If that was their expectation—that it's just a long nap—the practice (funerary practices in general) don't make a whole lot of sense. So these are just threads that I think conjoin in the whole idea. It just doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. You have the... David, I don't know if you've ever studied this, but just the terminology—the sleep terminology—is going to be pretty common for "you're dead." It doesn't necessarily have to mean you're in some sleep situation. So you've got three or four things just off the top of my head that don't seem to be terribly consistent with the idea. You want to add anything to that?

5:00

Dan: Ecclesiastes 9 is saying..."the living know they'll die, but the dead know nothing." Can you clarify what it is that they're trying to say?

MH: Yeah, I think the comparison there... The way I've seen it taken (this isn't unique to me) is that the dead know nothing with respect to the experience of the living. In other words, the things that you would know in your embodied life are now cut off from the dead because they're dead. Now that doesn't mean that the dead... You have passages to the effect that the dead or resurrected or glorified beings (although, maybe you'd want to say something about this, David)... A lot of the idea that we're being watched really refers to angelic activity. We did that episode on the books of heaven and stuff like that. So I don't know that that necessarily refers to the deceased, but you don't really get the impression that

they have the sort of knowledge of the embodied life that they did before—that they just know everything and track with everything. So that’s not unique to me. There are others who take it that way because of some of this other stuff.

DB: The only thing I’d probably add to that is, in my take on it, is there’s not... Well, this is sort of a common trope in scholarship that there’s not a monolithic view of afterlife in the Bible.

MH: There’s a divergence.

DB: Especially in the Hebrew Bible. There’s no developed afterlife theology that you see coming out of the New Testament in that way, so it’s not manifest in that way in the Old Testament. I mean, the best you can get is Daniel. You could argue for the language of “rising from dust” in Isaiah 24, the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 or something, but those are being interpreted later as a literal...

MH: What you just said reminded me of something else that... Here’s the kind of thing that—how much can you draw from it? “The shades are going to meet you,” like Isaiah 14. Okay, so the shades—the Rephaim—are going to meet you. What are they going to do? Look over your bed and say, “He’s asleep”? Or are they going to wake you up? Are they going to poke you? The idea that there’s this meaning... What’s being said is that, “Well, you ought to be alarmed at this.” Well, why would I be alarmed if I’m just asleep? In other words, there are these implications from the language, but you don’t have anything spelled out.

DB: Yeah, it’s interesting that you brought up, “going to be with the fathers.” So you see this in Abraham’s death, about going to be with his fathers. It’s not until later Jewish interpreters... So if you fast forward into the first century, say, Alexandrian... Philo of Alexandria will say of that text (and this is a common tradition) that “going to be with the fathers” doesn’t mean your burial plots with your fathers, it means the fathers celestial who rule in heaven. So he’s going to join them now. And so I don’t...do I think that’s implicit in Genesis? No. I don’t actually think it’s there, but it’s how they’re interpreting it later. So there’s layers on the Old Testament. Even going to Ecclesiastes, it’s kind of anachronistic to say that... By “anachronistic,” I just mean it’s not... We’re taking our time and imputing it back on theirs. Because in Ecclesiastes, maybe Ecclesiastes didn’t have a developed afterlife. That doesn’t mean there objectively isn’t one, right? So just because Ecclesiastes may not have some developed eschatology, we wouldn’t expect it to.

MH: It’s kind of interesting, because with David’s work that we’ve talked on the broadcast about, “they shall be as the stars,” and whatnot, you could see where somebody could be reading these Old Testament texts, which don’t say a great deal about... They don’t lay out a specific afterlife theology, but they say things that you can draw implications from. You can see how someone later could be reading that and have in mind the glorification idea, and then ask a simple mental

question, “Well that was a long time ago, so maybe we’re part of the eschaton.” And they could glom on... They could apply what’s being said to their own theology or situation.

DB: Yeah, that’s really good actually, because I think most afterlife... Now you can push back on this—I want to know what you think about it. I think most Jewish afterlife talk, pre-New Testament, is eschatology. You don’t have a separate discourse that’s just afterlife. It’s always... you always say, “glommed on,” I don’t know why you say that. I don’t know what that means.

MH: Accrued.

DB: My vocabulary’s not as developed. I guess, but...

MH: It’s not terribly fancy. [laughs]

DB: Whatever. So...

MH: I think my daughter taught me that.

[laughter]

DB: Alright. [laughs] “Vocab Lessons with Heiser.” So the afterlife talk... It doesn’t appear to me in early Jewish literature to be a separate conversation than eschatology. That is interesting, though. The idea of soul sleep comes from that, I think. People are seeing that—they’re seeing that, “Oh, that’s attached to eschatology, “ and so they...it would be a natural inclination without more critical eyes on traditions to think that, oh, that’s only in the end times. But know for sure, before the New Testament that Jews believed all sorts of things about the afterlife.

MH: I would only say that I think, what do we mean by afterlife? Do we mean destiny? Because that’s what he’s talking about with the eschatology stuff. Do we mean destiny or do we mean some sort of conscious existence? The destiny arc is really easy to see because of the glorification language and whatnot. But if you go to the burial practices of the time, they’re doing what they’re doing because they think that, “my family member, when they’re in the afterlife (which is where they’re at now), they’re going to find these things useful. We’re going to do these food offerings and drink offerings.” There is an idea that isn’t destiny, but it’s like, “right now there’s something going on over there,” that they’re part of the spiritual world. But it’s never articulated and spelled out. So you actually have two sides of this coin: you’ve got destiny, which is arguably the big one; and you’ve got this other sense that there’s just something going on over there. But I just don’t see soul sleep as a really... To me it would be really hard to argue that point from scripture, because when I’ve run across it, what you really see is just the

vocabulary, from the English Bible, or an English translation. People seize that and they go with it. I think it would be difficult to argue that.

DB: You know a good pathway into that, I think, if you're interested in refuting that is... People who think that way (like there's just soul sleep and then something later, in the future), I think the presupposition behind that position is that they don't believe that eternal life begins at the coming of the Spirit. Because I think that's a big deal in the New Testament. And I think this is where Paul actually gets his idea that death is the end of sin—that once some has become pneumatic (they've become a spirited person) that is a sign of celestial life already in the present. So it's like you've already started your transformation. And Paul even uses the metamorphosis terms that would be common in Greek metaphysical science.

MH: Yeah, that it's not waiting until you wake up, yeah.

DB: It's really interesting, actually, when you do studies on that. You just do a word study on II Corinthians 3—it'll trip you out. But that idea that the metamorphosis for immortal life has already started in the present. So if that's already started in your physical state for Paul, the assumption is that it continues.

MH: Yeah, it's not interrupted...

DB: Like, you don't start transforming and then, "Oh, hit pause real quick. You know, he's dead."

MH: Or "it's bedtime now and you'll wake up later."

DB: [laughs] Yeah, but that's interesting in Paul, though, because he's... You can tell that he still has this out-of-body afterlife view. I didn't use to think this, and I'm almost positive now that he thinks this. He has this out-of-bodied afterlife view, but that's not what he's thrusting all the time—he's always thrusting resurrection. I don't want to sound like N.T. Wright here, because we disagree so much on this, but I do agree with the part where Wright talks about that it's not about the afterlife per se; it's about the *after* afterlife, and so I agree with that part. That's actually a good way to put it.

15:00

MH: Anybody else?

DB: Even if you do have the afterlife afterwards, it's not the main thrust anyways.

MH: Other questions.

Questioner:

15:18

In that same conversation, what about the words of Jesus, when he talks about the rich man and Lazarus, and he lays out this thing with Abraham's bosom, Hades, is Jesus just telling a unique story, or is he speaking from experience?

MH: I'm not opposed to that being a parable, because that's usually where the discussion's at. I kind of take all of those things and put them in the same bucket—that they are ways of talking about the afterlife. In other words, I don't look at a passage like that and say, "Oh, now we have a physical description of the afterlife, and that you can plot it out on a map and it's got latitude and longitude, and we can make a drawing." I think they're all just ways of describing... Here you go with destiny, because it's very obvious in Luke 16 that there's a good destiny and a bad destiny. So I think they're talking about destinies and what happens on the other side—what goes on on the other side. And we still do this now because we have to. We're embodied beings. So we talk about people when they die—they pass over—and that's spatial language. It implies distance and a journey. We're forced to do that because that's the only way we can comprehend that kind of transition. So I think the biblical writers are doing the same thing, and they just do it in different ways—they have different metaphors for describing where a person is now in the afterlife and what their destiny is going to be. So I don't put too much literal stock into it, as though I could use this to construct what it looks like, but I do take it seriously that it reflects this notion that there's a good place in the afterlife and there's a bad place—all that sort of stuff.

DB: I wanted to say something. [laughter] So yeah, I don't want to harp on whether it's—I think it is a parable...

MH: And most scholars do, I don't have a problem with that.

DB: This is not a mutually exclusive thing, though. Just saying it's a parable doesn't mean it doesn't have an ontological referent for the hearers. It's just saying that... I'll put it this way: it's ironic that so many preachers will take that text to talk about heaven and hell, when that's not what the text is about. Any ontological referent to an afterlife is just playing on language that they already sort of "folk know." The point of it is the ethics of it: who is God vindicating? And it's the opposite of what they would assume. That's the point of the text.

MH: Yeah, that's easy to lose.

DB: The point of the text isn't, "Let me teach you this scholarly vision of what heaven is like. It's Abraham's bosom; he's really large." It's like, no, no, sorry.

[laughter]

MH: He's been working out, is that what you're saying?

[laughter]

DB: Abraham's become, like, Metatron, or something. (Well, maybe, I don't know, who knows?) But the point is, that's not the thrust of the passage. Who's being vindicated in that text? Yeah, exactly, that's literally Luke's point, and he never shuts up about that. So that's a theme throughout the entire gospel. So to try to use that text... Man, I just want to bang my head on the wall, when I read... Even commentaries do it, trying to say something about the afterlife with it! And I just don't think that's at all the point of it. Again, I'm not saying it's not... It has "afterlife speculation," but that's as far as I'll go. I won't say anything about its ontology.

MH: If you think about it, it reflects what people are thinking, like David said. They have this vocabulary, they have these ideas already. Because if they didn't—if Jesus goes into this, and it's totally new—they're like, "What's he talking about?" So it obviously reflects a belief about the afterlife, but you're right—it's easy to lose the other.

20:00

DB: Right. So one more thing about that. I think this is a trajectory we miss a lot in these texts (and you have this in a lot of afterlife texts, actually). You have these assumed beliefs: who's in on it, how does it happen, all these kinds of things, all this kind of eschatological speculation in early Judaism that goes into the New Testament. And a lot of the ways that that topic gets brought up in the New Testament tend to be subversive. So they're trying to reframe how you think about who's there. So a lot of that goes into the conversation, and we all sort of know that when we're doing polemics like that (attacking someone's current view of who's in and who's out, and reframing it)... If that's the thrust of the text, there's only so much you can say beyond it of what's the real... What does this mean eschatologically for us, like, scientifically, or whatever, because they're just not giving you that. It's more about reframing the audience's view of "what *is* going to happen? Who was there?" [crosstalk]

MH: It gets them to think about their relationship to God.

DB: Yeah, I would say it's more about ethics than it is ontology. It's not saying that it's not about ontology; it's just saying it's *more* about ethics.

MH: Anybody else?

Questioner: Well, I have my own question, but I want to get to the question that my pastor wanted to ask you. He was hoping to come tonight, but something's stopped it. So his question is:

21:00

What kind of criticism and pushback have you gotten in regards to the work you've done, especially people from different theological camps, such

as Pentecostals and Evangelicals? Did you see any long-time theologians maybe change their minds?

MH: That's a really good question, because I actually had a conversation relevant to that two days ago. In terms of reviews, I haven't had any substantive criticism in terms of, "we just hate this book, and it's just out to lunch." Nobody's doing that. At the popular level, you can look at Amazon and well, yeah, everybody gets shot at, so yeah. (But don't let me forget that, because there's something I want to say about that too.) So, no, the reviews—both on the popular level and appearing in journals—like Ben Witherington spent a huge amount of time on it. He had a nine-part review on his website, and we talked about that, and he really enjoyed the book. I've gotten emails, comments, personal conversation—just across the board—Pentecostals, people in Reformed Presbyterian churches, Reformed Baptists, traditional Baptists, Anglicans. I could show you emails from practically every denomination, which is nice because the book doesn't say anything about denominational distinctives. I'm not there to shoot at any of them, I'm not there to promote any. And people actually notice that. So that's really rewarding that I'm getting a lot of feedback from a lot of places. That's what I really hope to see.

Now a couple days ago, we were on an escalator and Mark Futato spied me. Futato is a Hebrew prof at a Reformed seminary, and we've known each other for a number of years because he went out and did some Mobile Ed stuff for us. But he came over and he said, "I just want to let you know that I'm reading your book now for the second time. I just love it." He actually said, "It has changed my thinking about several things." And he gave me a few specific examples. He said, "I'm doing the second read-through and I'm thinking about how I would apply this and how I would use this or that." So I get that from a variety of traditions, so there you go—it's two days old.

25:00

Eventually, though... The book's been so successful that Lexham is re-launching it, and what that means is they actually hired a publicist to actually do things—it's not just me anymore. And so I've been on several pretty large shows. I just got booked (by the way, if anybody watches this guy, I'd like to talk to you before you leave)... I just got booked on the Eric Metaxas show, and I know the name but I've never seen the show. I've talked to a couple people, like, "who's this guy and what does he do?" So what I told the people Lexham is, on the one hand, this is great that you're relaunching this thing and it's going to get wider exposure and whatnot, but I said, "You have to realize that it's not just going to continue to trend up. The haters are going to come out. People are going to read this and hate the book, so you guys have to be prepared for that." So I didn't want to rain on my own parade, but that's just the truth. That's the truth with everything. You know, Walton can write, and N.T. Wright—these guys that write lots of stuff—they get shot at all the time. I'm not going to be any different. Walton was a little perturbed this week at some of the things said about him in a session at ETS. It just happens. And he's a big boy, he know that. It's not the first time it's

happened. It's just the way it is. So I expect pushback to be what it is, and it's just going to happen. So, okay.

DB: Have you had any other pushback from scholars or pastors?

MH: No, not to this point. All the published reviews... nobody's come up to me and said something nasty. I know that because I use a lot of the published literature, I know who's on what side of different things. But what I'm hoping people grasp (including the people who are going to be critical of it, because they'll surface) is that the goal of the book is not to say that Mike has now figured out a theory of everything. That is not the goal. It's also not the goal that to like the book you have to agree with everything—every position Mike takes. The goal is, what can a text sustain? And operating on the assumption that the biblical person (biblical writers) were very predisposed to a supernatural worldview, how would you read this as a collective whole—a worldview, a framework?

If I can anticipate objections, it's like, "Look guys, look fellow scholar—believe it or not, the biblical people are not us. We are products of the Enlightenment. We are. That is what we are. They are not. So if you're uptight and you get your knickers in a... (I can't complete the phrase. You probably know that one better than I do.) If you just get uptight about what's going on in the book, or what I'm challenging the reader with, too bad. Because *they're not us*. Prove to me that they would have thought the way we do about X,Y, Z passage. That's what I want to see."

So that's the overall message, to try to really understand a number of things in the Bible and also the way they connect. The connection points are important to me—why they're there, how this passage would connect to this one. To really be able to do that, you have to have the Israelite in your head—the first century Jew in your head. That means you have to be able to read it like an ancient person would. What we do with that is up to us with application—how we teach certain things, how we would discuss certain things in certain passages today. I understand that. But when the biblical writer wrote this or that verse, or this or that passage, he was not a product of the Enlightenment. What he's thinking is going to be in some ways fundamentally different from the way we think. That's all I'm saying. And to me that's really, really obvious. But it's going to trouble some people because they've sort of camped on certain positions—in certain passages— and they don't want to entertain those kind of thoughts. So it'll come. We'll just wait and see. Did you marry your pastor's question to your own question, or...?

Questioner: No, my question's actually...

I'm a first year seminary student right now. I just started this past September. I've mentioned your material before, and my pastor got into it. His dad is a pastor and he got into it. It was great. But one of the things that

I'm trying to figure out (because I've gotten questions back regarding this) is this material sounds great, we agree with a lot of it, but what's the practical ministry application? And for me, in seminary, that's one of the questions I constantly am trying to think of. I can get all this great head knowledge, and just like Paul said, knowledge can puff up. And so, how does the information like the *Unseen Realm*...

MH: I think if you understand... The way I would answer that in quick mode is that I believe (and I think the book shows this) that God's relationship to spirit beings (his heavenly host, the Divine Council, all that stuff) serves as a template for the way God looks at us, the way God thinks about us, what we're tasked with, and our participation in God's program. If you see those things, then those should generate other thoughts. "Wow, participation in God's program... you mean not everything's predestined?" What we do actually matters. A simple thing like reclaiming the nations... this isn't really new stuff. This, in some ways, helps us frame what we're supposed to be doing. What is this thing called "the Kingdom?"

30:00

We (I'm sure David has a lot of thoughts on this), especially in evangelicalism, we think about Church and Kingdom... It can be very traditional, very bent on certain things—certain trajectories—but I just think it argues for the bigness of how we propel God's rule on earth. And I'm not a theonomist, so that is one place where we're not looking at to apply. But I think Kingdom rule and spreading the rule of God on Earth... I'm not thinking theonomy, I'm thinking of actually winning people—changing hearts and minds—and letting the Spirit of God change them, and then they can interact with other people where they're at and repeat the process. It's an entirely replicable process.

So I think the angelic stuff and all that is interesting (and I camp out there a lot), but what I'm trying to get people to think about is that you can learn a lot about the way God looks at you and the way God looks at what He wants us to do and our membership in His family (which takes us into sanctification and evangelism and missions and reclaiming the nations—all this sort of stuff)... You can learn to think about that better, a little more fully, if you understand this angelology stuff. So that's just one trajectory.

There are other trajectories, in terms of some sort of practical application. I'll just say one more thing, and I'll turn it over to David. When I hear that (and I know this isn't what's meant, but I have had people tell me this and it's why I think of it) but "what's the practical implication?" I have had people just point blank tell me, "You know, learning all this theology stuff is kind of useless. Theology's useless." It's hard for me not to think of... I didn't go off on the person that is thinking this, but it's like, "Dude, how can you say that? That's like being biblically illiterate. How can you think that thought?" Because what theology is supposed to do is it's supposed to make you think about your relationship with God, just at a fundamental level, and how God wants to interact with you and what He has

planned for you, your destiny, your purpose, who you are. Theology's supposed to do that. Christology, imaging... We're supposed to be conformed to the image of His Son, and imaging is a huge concept of the book. So it just seems to me that if we can't connect those dots, then maybe we need to spend more time introspectively trying to figure out those sorts of questions.

DB: My immediate answer when you ask that (because I was a pastor applying this stuff too)... The easiest answer to the practical outworking of thinking through celestial hosts over nations is *political* theology. This is politics we're talking about. And we in the modern West that are a product of the French Revolution, the American Revolution, John Locke, the deistic kinds of views of politics and religion, separating church and state (a completely foreign concepts to the pre-Enlightenment world—doesn't exist)... Politics *is* religion in the ancient world, and religion *is* politics in the ancient world. There's no distinction at all. The cult in a temple is where the king/deity rules his land from. It's all politics—that's where the treasury is. That's the IRS of the ancient world—where the god is. So this is political theology we're talking about. If you understand this worldview, it will fundamentally, from the bottom up, reframe the way you think about politics.

MH: Who is your king?

DB: You have to think about... Just an example of what I'm talking about. So if you think of Exodus, you have an enslaved people to foreign gods, and God says that in this night (in the Passover) is when I'll judge the gods of Egypt—or have victory. What is it—have victory over the gods of Egypt?

MH: Yeah, depends on the translation.

DB: Yeah, so the purchase of Israel is a religious, divine situation, but it is a political situation. It's *literally* delivering them from a false, oppressive, political regime. And they would not be able to distinguish between those two things. And that is precisely the language and the theology of baptism in the New Testament. This is how baptism is discussed in the New Testament. It is a new Exodus. You pass through the waters. You are baptized into the name.

MH: The new citizenship.

DB: The new citizenship. You have been transferred—past tense—from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved Son. Well, who's in the kingdom of darkness? Every nation not baptized. So if you're a native, you're treated as a foreigner. You're a foreigner in your native lands. You're in exile. This is not your home. Your citizenship is in heaven. You're in the Jerusalem above. This language only makes sense if they literally believe that there is an inaugurated king over the world right now as they're speaking. That's where all of the darkness and blindness language comes in in the New Testament. And this

35:00

is where—not to push back too hard against Mike here, but—I don’t like when people say, “Build his kingdom,” or something like that. I hate that language.

MH: Because it’s already in place?

DB: Yes! *Basilia tou Teo* (βασιλεία του Θεού) is “the reign of God.” God reigns right now. We’re declaring the fact that this is the case.

MH: By the way, I’m not denying that.

DB: Okay, I know, I just don’t like the verbiage, because people don’t have the teaching to back up what that means. So, “building the kingdom”... Don’t use that phrase, because we are announcing a reality—a fact. So we’re not doing anything substantial in that sense. Anything that happens is a result of the power of the Spirit, so we’re announcing a reality that, right now, people are walking around not thinking. They’re going to the voting booth and doing their normal politics thing and not thinking that right now, as we’re breathing his air, Jesus is Lord over the whole earth.

Speaker: Already but not yet.

DB: Yes, exactly. And the already part is where evangelical political theology stinks. It stinks. Because we’re not acting as if Jesus is Lord right now. And so we’re not actually facing the sort of apocalyptic pushback from the powers that we might feel if we actually embodied that ethic in the world. And so the question is (we all believe this, at our core, as Christians) that the proclamation that we make when we go through the baptismal waters is that there is another king than Caesar. There is another emperor of the world, and he’s one that doesn’t slaughter his people—he dies for them. And when he rules, he doesn’t say (like Caesar’s gospel, because Caesar has a gospel too) he has *euangelion* that he proclaims, and he has messengers he sends out too, that preach the *Pax Romana*—Roman Peace. “We bring peace to the world,” and “The gods have chosen the son to rule the whole world.” And you look at things like the Priene Inscription that has Augustus as the son of God and a gospel, and “peace to the world,” and blah, blah, blah. And when they hear that gospel, they’ll tell them to repent as well, but it’s not a sort of welcoming to the family, it’s like, “We’re taking this land, and we’re going to kill you if you’re not down.”

So you have the exact opposite in Jesus’ political theology. He’s sitting there bleeding on a Roman cross and saying things like, “Yeah, I could call down *legions* of angels right now,” and if you’re thinking legion in the Roman empire, you know this language, right? This is very subversive language to be saying as you’re dying on a Roman death tool. “I could call down legions right now.” But he doesn’t. And he *is* reigning in that sense. So the way we think of power—the way we think of rule, is so conditioned by this world—that we think, “When God’s kingdom comes, it’s just like this world’s rulers. He’s going to crush everybody,

and..." but his kingdom *did* come and no one recognized it. You see? It's the gospel of John, "If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight." You see? So, it's political theology we're talking about. Divine council *is* about political theology.

40:00

MH: I actually got into that on one livestream that we did at the coffee shop, if anybody saw that. But just the quick path there is, I was talking about what it would be like if we had a bunch of people that believed so strongly in the Kingdom of God—Christ's rule—that they were willing to do what the apostles did. They view their task, not as the exercise of power over other people, but their task is to change hearts and minds, get people to believe the gospel, to essentially join them in this effort, and they were willing to die for it. If you really think about it, if you have a bunch of people willing to die for that, and people seeing this kind of suffering (and the old cliché, but it's really not a cliché "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church")... That's a historical thing. People see Christians being put to death for just being Christians and that provokes questions. "Why? Why are we doing that to them? And why are they willing to have it done to them?" So it actually grows as Christians are willing to do that. And if you really think about it, that is an unstoppable force, because you can't kill it off. Killing it (or trying to kill it) makes it grow. It's just an unstoppable thing, but we don't really consciously think in those terms.

I think I got into that when somebody asked a similar question, and I had blogged about it about using ISIS as the analogy. And if you're in ISIS, you wake up every day, and think, "What can I do to restore the caliphate?" or whatever. In other words, you're consumed by the thought of serving your god, and then doing whatever is necessary to accomplish this mission. And on the reverse, if we had Christians that woke up every day with that thought, and went to sleep and their last thought was, "What can I do tomorrow?" (but it's defined as the gospel message)... If we had the same sort of single-mindedness as these people do, en masse, how could you get rid of that?

DB: Yeah, along the lines of bringing in the "willingness to die" part... I'm not plugging my own episode here, I'm just saying that this is the only thing that makes the resurrection intelligible. It's the only thing that makes it make sense. Because if you attach (like Paul does) resurrection to the death of the powers... which is so interesting that he does that, right? It's in a discourse all about resurrection in I Corinthians 15. The only narration we get of what the heck is happening as a result of that is the destruction of these rulers, and that's what it means to be resurrected. It's attached to this idea that it's a vindication of the real authorities in the world in a destruction of the false ones or the evil ones. So it's not like, "You get to become Sons of God with your golden ticket that you cash in in the end." That's not the idea. It's that... Enter Romans 8—this idea that the Sons of God, they're already walking around! They're already doing the Kingdom stuff. The whole creation, Paul says in Romans 8, is groaning, waiting for the apocalypse—the *revealing* of the Sons of God, not the *making* of the Sons of

God—the *revealing* of the fact that they're there. So you're walking around doing life, and then resurrection occurs—this last day—and it's revealed in glory that these pauper old women feeding all these poor mouths are actually the lords of the world. You see what I'm saying? So it's a completely different way of thinking about, who are the real rulers of this thing? So it is very much a political thing that we've de-politicized.

MH: To reduce that, I keep going back to, “do you really believe this world is not your home?” We sing that song. If you really believe that, this is how you're going to be thinking. Of course you're willing to die because, “this really isn't my home and I'm going to be resurrected,” and it's the “already-but-not-yet.” At a crisis moment like that, you're focused on the resurrection event, because you're willing to lay down *this* life, because you know the next one is yours to inherit. If you really think that—if you really believe that—then that ought to be the most practical thing in the world. I mean, what would be more practical than that? So I understand why the question was asked, but it goes back to inheritance, sonship, membership in the family, what's your destiny. These are all the major themes of *Unseen Realm* because of the major themes of this worldview. Like Dave said, we all sort of know this already, so it's nothing new, but I think it fleshes it out a lot more, and anything that will stimulate our thinking to think about that stuff in a different way is good to do, because it's really important. We should move on to another question.

45:00

Questioner: This came out of a Bible study that I was in a couple days ago, and we were reading Jonah chapter 1.

After Jonah gets thrown into the sea, it says in verse 16, “So the men feared Yahweh greatly and they offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and made vows.” And so in this Bible study, each person has to come up with a question. (You don't have to, but you're allowed to ask a question about the passage.) So my question was, “Did those men become converts? Did they renounce their other gods and become followers of Yahweh exclusively?” And somebody in the Bible study said, “Well, they would have had to be circumcised to do that, and it doesn't say for sure if they were or not, so we don't really know for sure, but it kind of sounds like they were pretty convinced that He was the God of gods at the end of the passage. And then I was wondering if that's really the case—if you would have had to be circumcised, before Jesus in the Old Testament. And then also, what about the Gentile women who became converts?

MH: What about the *Jewish* women?

Questioner: Yeah, I've always wondered that.

MH: Read the Jonah verse again—just start from the first verse if it's only a few verses in. It was in Jonah 1, right?

Questioner: Yeah. Do you just want me to...?

MH: Start from the beginning, yeah.

Questioner: OK. At the beginning of the chapter?

MH: Yeah.

Questioner: OK.

And the word of Yahweh came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² “Get up! Go to the great city Nineveh and cry out against her, because their evil has come up before me.” ³ But Jonah set out to flee toward Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh. And he went down to Joppa and found a merchant ship going to Tarshish, and paid her fare, and went on board her to go with them toward Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh.

⁴ And Yahweh hurled a great wind upon the sea, and it was a great storm on the sea, and the merchant ship was in danger of breaking up. ⁵ And the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they threw the contents that were in the merchant ship into the sea to lighten it for them. And *meanwhile* Jonah went down into the hold of the vessel and lay down and fell asleep. ⁶ And the captain of the ship approached him and said to him, “Why are you sound asleep? Get up! Call on your god! Perhaps *your* god will take notice of us and we won’t perish!” ⁷ And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots so that we may know on whose account this disaster *has come* on us!” And they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ So they said to him, “Please tell us *whoever is responsible that this disaster has come* upon us! What *is* your occupation? And from where do you come? What *is* your country? And from which people *are* you?” ⁹ And he said to them, “I *am* a Hebrew, and I fear Yahweh, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” ¹⁰ Then the men were greatly afraid, and they said to him, “What *is* this you have done?” because they knew that he *was* fleeing from the presence of Yahweh (because he had told them). ¹¹ So they said to him, “What shall we do to you so that the sea may quiet down for us?” because the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. ¹² And he said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea so that the sea may quiet down for you, because I know that on account of me this great storm *has come* upon you all.” ¹³ But the men rowed *hard* to bring

***the ship* back to the dry land, and they could not *do so* because the sea *was growing more and more tempestuous*, against them. ¹⁴ So they cried out to Yahweh, and they said, “O Yahweh! Please do not let us perish because of this man’s life, and do not make us guilty of innocent blood, because you, O Yahweh, did what you wanted.” ¹⁵ And they picked Jonah up and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ So the men feared Yahweh greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and made vows. (LEB)**

50:00 **MH:** Yeah, I just wanted to get the whole context so everybody hears it. It’s hard to know from that passage whether we have (I use the academic term) a bunch of henotheists now—that Yahweh is the biggest and baddest of the deities. In other words, they’re not exclusively devoted to Him like converts. That’s more likely in my mind (just because of the ancient mentality, especially for a pagan) than the alternative, that “Well, we’re never going to do a religious thing with respect to any of these other gods that we started out the passage calling on,” because they call on their own gods. So I don’t think we have enough detail to determine whether we have a conversion here. What we at least have is a recognition of the might of Yahweh (to use our modern way of talking about these things) that can be a testimony to them or an indication that maybe they’re moving down a path toward that, but I don’t think we can really conclude that they’ve wound up as being like Abraham—a faithful follower of Yahweh. I think that says a little bit too much. There were some follow-up elements to your question?

Female speaker: So my friend at the Bible study had said that the reason that we don’t know for sure is because it doesn’t say whether or not they got circumcised and that if they were going to become converts, they would have had to be circumcised.

MH: Yeah, I’m going to go back to my “While We Were Yet Sinners” sermon. I think it’s significant that Jesus uses Naaman and the widow of Zarephath as examples of faith. As I said in that sermon (I don’t know if you heard it), but here’s a guy Jesus uses as an example of faith over against the scribes and the Pharisees. So if he’s good enough for Jesus, he’s good enough for me. And what I mean by that is, would Jesus really hold up this man and this woman as an example of faith if he didn’t think that, “OK, now we’ve switched allegiance here.” Because what Naaman did... We don’t have really any details with the widow of Zarephath; there’s very little there. But with Naaman, it’s like, “I want dirt because now I’m going to sacrifice only to the Lord.” I mean, there are things in the passage that indicate this change of mind in a really black or white sort of way. But here’s a guy that, he’s never going to go to temple, he’s going to go back to Syria, he’s never going to observe the festivals, he didn’t ask the prophet, “Hey, can I have a copy of the Torah?” He’s never going to really know much that an

Israelite would know. There's no indication he's going to get circumcised and do the feasts and do the calendar—all that stuff. What he knows is really simple, but it happens to be the first and greatest commandment, "Thou shalt have no gods before me." That's his theology. And he's taking that to the bank. He's going all the way—whole hog—with that, and Elisha says, "Good for you. Take as much dirt as you can carry. Shalom." So this whole business about this assumption that people had to do things in the law to be in right relationship with Yahweh, I think is just not correct. It's drastically overstated. And it really is this presumptive kind of thing based on the New Testament Judaizer content. Because that's what they're telling the Gentiles to do, so that gets read back into the Old Testament in these kinds of episodes.

DB: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, *with His people.*" That would require them still being Gentiles. [laughs]

MH: Yeah. There was still this category of the righteous Gentiles.

DB: "The queen of the south will rise up in the judgment and judge you." We have no record of the queen of Sheba converting to Yahwism. We know she gave truck-tons of money to the temple—like more than Israel had ever seen. And because of the wisdom of Solomon (Solomon's God), "Man, this is the wisest guy ever"... And she brings the treasures to the temple, and that is basically worshiping a god in the ancient world. But it doesn't say that she's now a Yahwist and she signed up for her Israeli calendar.

MH: It's hard to know...

DB: I don't want to be anachronistic here, but I think the things you see in Acts, especially with Peter... I think that's the big one, with Peter, when he says that it's some realization to *him*. But because it was a realization to him, that doesn't mean it wasn't the case. It's that he just realized this fact: that God doesn't show partiality to those who fear him. And so you have the whole God-fearing tradition—they're not Jews, but they... "God of Israel, man..."

55:00

MH: Yeah, and about the women, this is just my take. I think circumcision also was a sign to Israelite women, because of the restrictions on marriage. You had to marry an Israelite guy. You're going to have your males circumcised. So basically, every time they have sex, it's like you have both a visual—you get this reminder—and it's a covenantal reminder. And so when we have our baby boy, we do the same thing, and we're supposed to marry within the tribe, so to speak. So that difference—that practice—was not missed by women. It's still an evident thing in their culture, and they're going to learn from that—they're going to have this lesson, this idea, reinforced to them. So they're not excluded in terms of the importance of the sign.

DB: There are a couple of specific things about Jonah, too, in that text that sort of stand out in relation to the question of the vows they take. So those are more than likely have cultic context to them. So it's one thing to praise a god, but it's another thing to make vows to one. So in Jonah's context... You have to understand that everything is stylistic in Jonah, as well. That's fore-grounding—that's like foreshadowing—the situation with Ninevah that's coming. The only ones praising God in the end are these Gentiles, and Jonah's in the sea.

MH: He's griping about their conversion.

DB: Ninevah is repenting and there's Jonah complaining out in the tree still—under the tree, or the vine. There's a lot of stylistic stuff going on there where it's kind of like on Jonah. So it depends how far you want to push it, you know? Is Jonah actually trying to say something about, "Look at these new Gentile converts. Let's focus on them." Really, no. It's not saying that's not important. I actually think the vows thing is very important. But there's some sort of Yahweh devotion now that's established with them.

MH: Yeah, I would say there's at least this impulse—this recognition that's gone on—and you could bookend (just to pick up David's point). The book ends with Jonah sitting there complaining about the Gentile conversion. So if you want to, you could make the argument that literarily, the book ends with this opposition. And then you can read that back—you can read the conversion bit of it back to the sailors. You could do that, but I would just need more of an indication for that. So it would depend on how deliberate you think that is. It would be nice to see something drawn more specifically from chapter 4 about the way they respond to the message of repentance. In a way, I'd want to see that. But it might be a little unfair, because in that part of the story in chapter 1, they're not really asked. There's no gauntlet laid down or a demarcation point: "Are you on the Lord's side or not?" You could look at the passage that way, but I would just like to see more. But at the very least, there's this impulse. They've gained some knowledge of Yahweh here and it's pretty serious. And at the very least, that should influence their thinking from that point on, so we don't know specifics beyond that.

DB: I definitely think it is part of the trajectory—the post-exilic trajectory of Gentile inclusion as an eschatological phenomenon—because he's supposed to go preach repentance, and they *do repent*. So it's this welcoming of the nations...

MH: And lo and behold, it's Tarshish—he flees to Tarshish.

DB: Exactly. Yeah. So there's so much symbolism going on there, but that's really significant when you get in readings of Jonah later. And especially with the sign of Jonah that Jesus talks about. It's like, "I'll only give you the sign of Jonah." I always wonder about that, because, yes, OK, the obvious three days, and then he comes out, yeah, duh—death and resurrection—that's definitely in mind. I think there's a lot more in mind there, because we're talking about Gentile

inclusion, which is happening at the proclamation of gospel after this occurs. And he's the great prophet of Yahweh.

MH: And Jesus has tipped that hand. It's easy for us to sit here...

DB: Already in the gospel before he says that. So that's interesting.

MH: Right. Like with the Gadarene. He's in Gentile territory, because, "Hey, they're raising pigs here, that's really not what Jews would do." So he'll go to these Gentile places and assert his kingship—his authority—and the claim is pretty obvious. "I'm not just here for the Jews. I'm here for, like everything." So he's tipped that hand a little bit. And you say, "Well shouldn't the Jews have known that? Can't they read their Old Testament?" Well, yeah, they did have that, and they were probably exposed to it, but still, in the gospels it's very clear that Jesus has to teach this to the... Paul even refers to the full inclusion—the full inheritance of the Gentiles—as a mystery. So it's hard to know who got how much of the message and when. But it was there. You run into these episodes where...yeah.

DB: But you don't even need the New Testament for this.

MH: You should be able to pick it up.

1:00:00 **DB:** Right. Isaiah's dealing with this. The Psalms even are read eschatologically this way—which you do see in the New Testament, but already beforehand they're being used this way. But the prophets are clearly talking about the Gentiles coming...Take Isaiah's typology and Jonah's after Isaiah—probably way after—so there's definitely clear settings that people in a post-Isaiah world can draw on already within the Hebrew scriptural tradition that look forward to *the Gentiles themselves* coming to the mount of God. Not to get the "sniff, sniff" in Isaiah. It's saying the Gentiles are actually coming and saying, "Teach me your ways." Now some Jews would interpret that as, "Well, this means they're going to take on the covenant."

MH: Sure. "Surely they must be circumcised."

DB: "Surely, they've got to be..." Or if you're at Qumran, they're like, the meal that they're eating, or something... There's weird ways of interpreting this in Judaism (well, and Christianity, too). But the point is, there's already stuff in the prophets that signals that, because all the text in which Paul's making these cases for Gentile inclusion as Gentiles (which by the way is still a pretty big problem in scholarship—I have friends writing papers on this still)... But Paul's quoting Psalms and Isaiah and texts from the Torah, so they're already thinking with ancient texts about Gentiles coming as Gentiles. It's just super-controversial. That's why we have most of the New Testament, actually is this issue.

MH: Put yourself in... Let's just say here we are in a synagogue in Asia Minor somewhere, with Paul running around talking about Jesus of Nazareth. If you don't believe that, you're going to be opposed to this guy and his message. And so it's very easy to see how to circle the wagons and protect your turf—your identity—taking these Old Testament things and filtering them through your own identity. Of course, if you want to be one of the people of God, then you get circumcised, you do the Sabbath, you do all these things, even when the passages don't spell that out. They're just like, "They're just Gentiles coming to the Lord, to worship the Lord." There's even passages that talk about Gentiles being priests... the Most High. They're just stuff like that. Not to exclude the notion that the Pharisees and scribes are really just protecting turf, but what I'm saying is that you can see how easily they could do that.

DB: Paul's a Pharisee.

MH: I know, but that would offend them even more. It just ticks them off, because he used to be with them.

DB: I'm just saying. He still identifies as one.

MH: They're trying... When, he has to defend his street cred...

[laughter]

DB: Resurrection's pretty Pharisaical.

MH: I know. He's not a Sadducee, OK. There you have...

[laughter]

MH: But you can see how they could get there, and then you have the whole Judaizer problem. But it's not a problem that arises from these Old Testament passages.

DB: I want Paul to still be a Jew.

MH: But we look at this kind of stuff and isn't it interesting that the way we look at people like, "Are you really a Christian?" We actually sort of reflexively do the same thing. We make some work or some deed or some ritual, or whatever it is... It's like we mimic the Judaizers when we talk about Christians, which is really off.

DB: And in our interpretation of ancient Israel—we do the same thing to them. And this is a difficult conversation, because I'm not convinced that there is a monolithic view on this in the Old Testament. Because there's laws that clearly say one thing, and then you have narratives where they're doing something different, and no one's condemned. So it's just sort of like, okay, what's going on

here? And you have rabbis playing with that later. Obviously, we're not trying to say this is just, "Oh, well, here's an answer. 'Get out of jail free' card." So it's more complicated, obviously, than that, so Paul seems like he's still working stuff out, too, in his letters. So yeah, that's a really good question.

1:05:00

MH: Paul, because there is no such thing as "Second Temple Judaism" (singular). Paul is going to be saying certain things in certain ways. And he's probably thinking about a particular strain of Judaism, and there's going to be many of them. The problem for New Testament scholars is to try to reconstruct that conversation so they know exactly what Paul is saying to whom—what context fits which group, what context fits which way of thinking that you can find in Judaism. That's really kind of an impossible task.

DB: It's so hard.

MH: To do that. But it's hard to reconstruct every detail.

DB: We can't.

MH: Another question.

1:05:00

Questioner: Hey Mike.

On your website, you have this six-part thread on Romans 5:12. I thought it was great. I've had a hard time trying to reconcile the doctrine of original sin with a just God and, frankly, with just biblical texts in general, like the ones you bring up in Revelation in accountability. I'm wondering if you'd be able to flesh out the journey of a human being from birth to—I don't know—accountability, and how that works out when... and it just seems to me that...

MH: Yeah, I struggle less with that because my view of Romans 5:12 is not that we're guilty because of what somebody else does. So you'll find that in Eastern Orthodoxy, you'll find it in certain segments of Baptist circles who will take that view. It's a minority view, certainly, within anything that could be put into the evangelical bucket (like Baptists) but the East is there as well. So if that's the case, then our accountability for God I think makes more sense, because it's because we sinned. So that to me answers that particular question.

So as far as the journey, I don't know that we have to recount the journey. I don't think we could possibly know when God looks at some act that a child does (or whatever age) and says "Okay, this is a rebellion—this is something in the heart." I just don't think we can know that. But I do think there is a category of innocence, because I take Romans 5:12 the way I do, in concert with those traditions. So the accountability issues seems to me pretty clear. We're

accountable to God when and because we sin. But I can't create a typology for that.

Male speaker: I guess part of the doctrine of original sin kind of feeds into the idea of why we sin as well, in some threads. It also seems like it's kind of like this "holy cow" doctrine that, if you come against, you're in big trouble.

1:10:00

MH: Yeah, I've mentioned this book before. And again, the same caveats—if you got into this book and you found out the author is a Mormon, don't let that freak you out, because he's not doing Mormonism in the book: *When Souls Had Wings*. It's the book that's an intellectual history of pre-existence. There are several chapters that discuss why Church Fathers, like Augustine, landed where they did on that issue. They all held some view of pre-existence. And even Augustine says in several places that, "We're still thinking about this. All the ideas are worth thinking about." And he may not be positively predisposed to embracing one thing over the other. He just says, "I don't know—that's kind of hard." But he'll shift in his understanding based upon things that are going on around him. And that's the really interesting part of the book. His debates with the Pelagians move him a little bit over this direction, not the other. There'll be something else that someone else writes that he either likes or reacts to, and then when he stakes out that turf over here, that influences the way he's going to look at something over here, because he has to be consistent. He's really hung up on predestination. And so that (according to Givens, who's the author), that's sort of the thing that nudged him away from the other views of the origin of the soul to a more traducian position. Because then his predestination system just seemed to work better, so he actually sort of defaults to this. There's all this kind of stuff going on in the early Church Fathers, but because you have certain decisions made in the context of certain debates and also in the context of interacting with other people (that you may like or don't like what they're saying)... If you have a really high status, like Augustine did, the decisions you make are going to influence a tremendous number of people. And you're going to build this reputation, and you're going to become the reference point for doctrinal thinking about this issue over here. "What did Augustine say?" Yeah. It really is going to be this sort of unstoppable force within the Western Church, because people after Augustine are going to be very hesitant to disagree with him, even though he wasn't always where he landed. But we lose that debate, we lose the context, we lose the discussion. The question just becomes for us, "What did Augustine say?" And that is another way of asking, "What does our church tradition say?" Because it's built in part on some important thinkers like Augustine. [My view] is a minority view, but I really do think it makes the most sense, even though it's contrary...

DB: Not in the East.

MH: Well, not in the East, it's not.

DB: Yeah. Let's be careful when we say "minority."

MH: In the West, definitely.

DB: We just pretend the Eastern Church doesn't exist, but they've had a more consistent theology than the West has. And let's also keep in mind that that question is directly tied to the Eastern view of theosis.

MH: Yeah.

DB: So the denial of original sin in the Augustinian sense in the West is the vehicle by which you get the high view of deification in the East. It's not that the West doesn't believe in deification, it's just the East is better at it, I think. Putting their hearts on the table.

MH: There are a number of listeners to the podcast that are Eastern Orthodox. I had... He doesn't work for Logos any more (he switched companies), but I had a friend there in the building and that was one of the things that really drew him into listening to the podcast—the Romans 5:12 stuff. Because the only place he's ever heard that is his own context, so there you have it. They've been there a long time. But in the West, it's dominated by other thinkers.

Questioner: [inaudible]

MH: I don't know. I never really had any discussion with... I'm sure you're going to have a lot of people (theologians) that are part of the Western tradition that aren't going to like it. That's kind of obvious, but I've never had any discussion... I've never done a paper on it or anything like that. It's one of those things that if you're a theologian, you know this view is out there, and you know where to situate it. So I can imagine somebody hearing it and saying, "Well, why don't you just be Eastern Orthodox then?" That's probably where it would go. Another question.

1:12:15

Questioner:

So piggy-backing on this and last week's episode where we were talking about origin of the soul, with creationism and traducianism and pre-existence of the soul, what are your thoughts on a fourth path, which would the divisible soul? Adam was given a soul by God, Eve inherited her portion from Adam's rib (because she didn't receive the breath of God—she was just formed out of Adam's rib), and then through the fall of Adam, we've all received our fallen original sin portion of the divisible soul. I don't know if that would reconcile...

MH: Yeah, I would say I don't think Romans... I think Romans 5:12 actually contradicts that.

Questioner: OK.

MH: And the other problem I have is I don't see... I'm not a trichotomist. I think the Old Testament is immaterial and material division. And I take the breath of life—that passage—as giving God credit for why we're alive. I don't think it's a special breath planted into someone. I think it's a metaphor for God being the source of life, specifically our life. And I'll admit, too, it's connected to imaging as well, because of our status. There's probably part of that that makes it important to connect that divine activity with the human being, as opposed to something else. To me, the big obstacle there is Romans 5:12.

DB: Well, I think there's a bigger one than that, which is I Corinthians 15 and the resurrection bodies...

MH: You just want to talk about I Corinthians 15.

DB: No! He literally says, “the *soma psychichon*” (“the soulish body”), or a body that's demarcated by soul or is encompassed by soul or whatever. I don't know how you would... talk about it. [crosstalk]

MH: Animate wouldn't be enough?

DB: Maybe. Well, that might be... well, they're both animate. But he has it in contrast to *soma pneumaticon*. So the soulish body versus the pneumatic body, or the spirit body. So whatever we translate as “soul” in Paul, which is... not there... in that sense.

MH: He's saying the celestial body...

DB: Yeah, it's like this “celestial versus the terrestrial” one's just gone. Anything that would be translated as *psychon* which we translate as soul in the Bible, is gone—it's not there anymore.

MH: It's disconnected... Yeah, that's certainly an obstacle.

1:15:00

DB: So I'm like, with the only thing you have to translate in Paul that means “soul” he says it's just gone and done away with completely. So whatever that means for Paul, it doesn't exist anymore. [laughs] So it doesn't mean there's not continuity between form; it means the substance is completely different. So yeah, that's very problematic for the idea of soul as some sort of carryover type thing.

MH: Yeah. Another question.

1:15:20

Questioner: To piggy-back on that one a little bit, but on a practical application stance, but I guess I would just ask you guys to track more about it.

The problem that I have with original sin is kind of two things with the idea that God would create us in a way (kind of why we sin)... So I know that we all have sin, but *why* we sin—that God would create us in a way that would force us to sin, and then yet we’re accountable for it. I guess I’m presupposing that God is just, and I don’t find that just. So if you could explain how it *is* just, and I’m wrong, I’m glad to...

MH: Yeah. I don’t see God as *forcing* us to sin. Now what I *do* see is God creating beings that are like him, but they are still lesser. In other words, we’re not perfect and we don’t have God’s impeccable, perfect nature. We are reflections of him—we are not him. So, by definition, that does create the potential for failure—for inconsistent choice when it comes to obedience, stuff like that. We could give in to an impulse we have and not be able to thwart it and that sort of thing. I can see that kind of thing surfacing in a being that’s less than God, but that doesn’t mean God is standing behind going, “Come on, it’s time you sin now! Let’s get this show on the road here.” He’s not making it happen, but he’s creating us in such a way certainly that the preconditions for it happening are going to be there. But the only way to avoid that is to—pardon the dumb analogy—but the only way to avoid it would be to clone himself. And that’s just not what’s going on with human creation. So I don’t look at it as God creating beings and then forcing them to violate what he’s saying. But the conditions are just there inherently because we’re not him. That’s how I approach that.

DB: My cop-out answer would be (because I don’t think there is a solution to the problem of evil) that theodicy isn’t possible. The only solution we have is faith in the resurrection. And that’s not a solution, it’s just faith—you believe. But the cop-out version of that would be, James says pretty clearly that God never tempts with evil, so the temptation to evil is at the root of your question, I think. And I think James just shuts that off from the root. Like, “No, God *never* tempts with evil.” That’s why you have a tempter. So it’s the power is the other, which does cause a problem in sovereignty issues. [crosstalk]

MH: It resides in the flesh, though, too. You’ve got that issue.

DB: Right. But if you deal with the whole... Yeah. I’m going to leave it there, because I don’t want to get in trouble, because a lot of people listen to this podcast. [laughter] I have to get a job in the future. [laughs]

MH: But look at who the tempter is. The tempter is a being, also created as an imager. The same creator. You’ve got the plural language and imaging going on in Genesis 1. They’re sharing the same set of attributes, but nevertheless, you could say with Psalm 8 and Hebrews that humans are lesser. Okay, we’re lesser, but that being is still not God. That being is still not God, and so yeah, you have the same circumstances where this being can act in self-interest—wanting autonomy, wanting to be released from the authority of God or whatever

(however we would think about or imagine the motives). And then that being in turn goes to the human and starts to manipulate. So you have the temptation from the outside, but even that is still in some way attached to lesser-ness. And for the human, you have this external force. James certainly says that, but he adds the whole progression of sin, involving the flesh. Paul says the same thing, too. So there are things that are working against us. And look, why is Christ able to withstand temptations and the weaknesses of the flesh like we've discussed on the podcast before? Well, it's because he does share that nature. He is the God incarnate. So that's the thing that separates him from us. And all that's super-important because of everything that extends from the incarnation. I still don't view that as God forcing sin, but how would he prevent... Other than removing free will or cloning himself, how would he prevent that possibility? And that's the inscrutable point, because then you have to ask the question, "Why would God bother to do any of this anyway?" You fall back to the theological kinds of answers—that God just loves to create, God just wanted to do this or that or the other thing. So that, to me, is the more inscrutable point. But it's a positive point, because what it tells us is that God would rather have made us than not. And that's kind of an important thought. So even though we can't nail everything down, we're left with a thought like that, which is a good thought, and an important one.

Questioner: I was just going to ask if it would be helpful to try to reconcile some of that struggle with thinking about that we inherit Adam's pre-fall nature. In other words, Adam didn't inherit any "fallen nature," and yet, he still disobeyed and sinned. That free will was there.

MH: So it's like an analogy or a template, yeah.

Questioner: Correct. So we still have that... We always think about what we inherit is post-fall nature, but Adam, not having that post-fall nature, was created "perfect"—never sinning—and yet he still had a nature that predisposed him to be able to sin.

MH: Mm hmm.

Questioner: So if we inherit *that*, then you can see an inherent goodness that God creates us all with and it kind of reconciles God's justness with his love and all of those things. I don't know if it's helpful to think about it that way, but...

MH: I think there's things in there that certainly worth thinking about and there are trajectories there that would probably be helpful. Question over here?

1:22:00

Speaker: I'm about a third of the way through *Unseen Realm*, and the practical way that your ministry has impacted me was just a better understanding of evil. I grew up under Calvinistic teaching, so I read the Bible through that lens, and I don't even know how not to. And I was never told, "God causes evil" and "God

does this,” but I very much grew up under the teaching that he’s always in control, and he foreordains everything—he predetermines everything. And as a child, maybe, not knowing how to work that out, I just maybe came to subconscious conclusions that when evil happens, God...I don’t even want to say that out loud, but that God’s behind that...

MH: Mm hmm. Right.

Speaker: But reading a more—you know the way you describe Satan’s fall and what he did and how he was able to tempt Eve and then Adam was tempted—that’s really helped me to see evil for what it is and how it began, and God, in his love, creating us with free will... It means he won’t control us.

MH: Right. Evil is no less real outside of the orbit of Calvinism—it is what it is. But I struggled with the same sorts of things, because that is the logical conclusion in a really... I’ll use a nice word: in a consistent Calvinist system. Those are the thoughts you have to think. You’re just ultimately driven there. And we can all point to some Calvinist theologian that somehow tries to get out of that conundrum, but it’s really hard to do. [laughs] To kind of be honest with the whole scheme of things. I think we all have these Calvinistic phases. I did, but it troubled me, it really troubled me.

DB: Crying at John Piper’s sermon.

[laughter]

MH: I didn’t do that.

DB: Oh, I did when I was a kid, man. I came to Bible college thinking I’m like going to make everybody Calvinist at Bible college. And after a year of deconstruction in New Testament survey with Daniel Street.

MH: You got beaten down.

DB: Just ripped my mind out of my head and stomped on it. [laughter] And I was like “OK, I don’t know what to believe anymore.” [laughter] So that was fun.

MH: Did you want to add anything? Thank you, by the way.

Speaker: No thank you, for writing the book. Yeah, also, just... Satan is the cause evil—we’re the cause of evil. We don’t make the right choices, we do sin, we do cause harm to each other, but some of it is just so severe. Everyone suffers in their own way, but there are the people who *really* suffer. They’ve been. They really go through a lot. They’ve been raped, they’ve been beaten, whatever. And understanding God is not... that’s not God’s will, that’s not God’s desire—but it happens, and he is watching it. And it must grieve him. I know that

it must, but... To kind of reconcile... I think I've been able to also see through your book that, through us being the image-bearers, we're to alleviate what suffering we can, and we're to be... We're to do all we can—that's part of our job. But also, the reality is that there's still evil and suffering and God does see it and watch it. I know it will be redeemed, but it's hard to watch it, and it's hard to see it when it's...

1:25:00 **MH:** Yeah. And I think that's why David said what really makes sense of it is the resurrection.

DB: I didn't say it makes sense.

MH: Well, you know what I mean. I can't think of your exact words.

DB: Yeah. I said it was my only *hope*.

MH: Yeah.

DB: I may not have used that word, but...

MH: You said, the answer to theodicy is...

DB: I said there is no answer to theodicy, in my opinion.

MH: But that's where it leads you.

DB: We may disagree—I don't know.

MH: No, I think it's a good statement. You know, you have, "this world is not our home," God has a people, things will go full circle back to Eden. Sovereignty doesn't have to necessarily be front-loaded—it can work in the end, and God is still sovereign, even though he wouldn't be... that's not the way that John Calvin or somebody else would talk about it. It doesn't make God any less sovereign to have things end up the way he wants them to end. Because the out-flowing, outworking of his plan... So I do think that's an important element.

DB: We really need to recapture the lament psalms in church. Big time. I mean, almost a third of our psalms are all lament. They don't end happy. They're like, "Everything sucks. Why do you hate us, God?" Psalm over. [laughter] And people... You turn on the TV and you don't hear none of that crap!

MH: I think Joel Osteen preached one...

DB: Yeah. [in high voice] "Everything's great, guys." [laughter] You know? "No, it's not. My mom just died." No, it's not great. "No, but put a smile on your face."

“NO!” I thought death was the enemy. I thought we mourn with those who mourn. Right? Not rejoice with those who mourn. You mourn with those who mourn.

MH: The apostles were always happy, though... [laughs]

DB: [sarcastically] Oh, yeah, they were *real* happy. Paul's a cheery guy.

MH: They were always on top of the world. Their life was an endless stream of victories. Yeah.

DB: Read Galatians. Really happy guy. No, but I'm serious, the lament psalms—they're liturgical in ancient Israel. They're liturgical in the church. This is still in the church's liturgy, I mean, if you go to liturgical churches. If not, try it. I don't know. [laughter] It's interesting, OK? But seriously, the lament psalms are there for a reason. There are so many for a reason—because that expression of just not having an answer, and reading every theology book that there is on it, and still being (I'm just going to say it) just pissed, and throwing them across the room... This is a righteous expression of fidelity to God. Questioning God is actually something he welcomes. One of the most cut-me-to-the-core moments I had was with Rick Watts—remember? He was a scholar from Cambridge who taught at Regent for years. I think he's doing something else now. He wrote a book on Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark. It just blew my mind. But he was talking about the story in Exodus of the striking of the rock where there's this trial scene where (you've talked about this) God welcomes the elders to question him and invoke his presence over the rock and strike it, and yet what comes from the rock? It's water that brings life when he's struck. And you have this sort of image in John, in the crucifixion. This is when you have the incarnation, that we look up and see the one who's raised up—the one who saves in John. And they strike him and what flows out of him? Blood and water. And it's this echo, that God is *allowing* himself to be put on trial. He's *letting* you question it, you know? He's letting you question him. And it's this filthy sort of questioning—it's not even a righteous one—but he lets it happen. And it tells us something about the nature of God. It teaches us something about it, about him—that the lament tradition... I'm attaching this to the lament tradition because I think that's a righteous form of questioning. It's okay to cry and scream and yell and, “Where are you?” Those are actually righteous expressions of faith. I don't know why there are so many books written against that, because there's tons of scriptures that are like, “Yeah, embrace that.” And there'll be times in your Christian life that, if you're honest, you'll wake up in the morning saying, “Is there even a God?” And that's OK. I know that sounds crazy for some people, but that's OK—that's what a real relationship is like. Anyone in a real relationship says, “Amen.” It *assumes* a relationship, right?

MH: Well, yeah, it goes back to the questioning. Questioning and unbelief are two different things. We tend, unfortunately, to conflate those things. But they're two different things.

DB: “Help my unbelief.”

1:30:00

MH: Yeah. There’s a person who wants to stay in the faith.

Speaker: Let me ask... As you guys are talking, the first thought that kind of came to my mind was... I was in a conversation on our Facebook group. And I think it was somewhere in the context... and my head is, like... so when I’m hearing you talking about “Why don’t we question? Why don’t we scream?”—a song I’ve heard from this old band was simply called, “Something to Say.” And the whole entire feeling and emotion of that song was basically, “I’m afraid to question, because I’m afraid 1) I’ll lose my faith, but also because 2) I’m afraid that I’m going to be all alone. That no one in the church, not even God, will come and help me. And a part of me is like, I guess, maybe... This is not to answer. To me, this is just kind of reflection.

MH: Mm hmm.

Speaker: With our Western Christianity, we’ve become so individualistic that when the hard times and questions come, we fear that if we were to voice those questions, we would be completely alone and isolated.

MH: Yeah, and if you feel that, that’s a demonstration of how unlike a family the church can be. Because if it’s your own family and somebody just goes off like that, your first response isn’t going to be, “Well, I guess they just jumped ship.” [laughs] And then you don’t really deal with that person anymore. Of course not, because they’re your brother, your sister, Mom, Dad, whatever. You’re going to try to help that person. You’re going to try to understand what’s going on—basically be a son or a brother or sister to that person. That’s what would happen in a normal—and even a fairly dysfunctional—family unit. It’s like in a lot of churches, it’s even like more dysfunctional than dysfunctional, and the analogy... I agree—I think that’s really telling.

DB: One of my theology profs at undergrad would always say (or, he taught psychology, actually). He would always say, “Don’t give them a prescripture.”

MH: [laughs] Prescripture...

DB: Yeah. It’s like, [southern accent] “Well here, brother, just meditate on John 1,” or whatever.

MH: Prescripture... [laughs] That’s pretty good.

DB: Yeah, prescripture. Don’t give them a prescripture—it’s not going to do any good.

[MH laughs]

DB: And we need to recapture, on top of lament—yeah, it’s pretty good, I mean, I liked it, it stuck with me.

MH: You stole it, I’ll steal it now.

DB: I stole it. Go ahead. He needs to copyright that thing. [laughs] But the idea of a lament and presence is inseparable. What you said really struck me, because I’ve experienced this in ministry, in growing up in the Southern evangelicalism. I experienced that same thing. It’s like, the kids with the questions were always the ones ostracized out of the “church posse.” And those who struggled with things that the ministers didn’t have any training or answers for just had to leave and go somewhere else that could maybe find them answers something. And I’m thinking... Ethicists that have talked about this, that sometimes you don’t have to bathe problems in words. There’s not theology or scriptures you can bathe things in to make them better. You just sit with them in the dark and be there. Like Job—the best friends are the ones that shut up and don’t try to fix the problem, just sit there with you in the muck. And that’s the whole idea of presence. This is why the incarnation is *so powerful*. The idea is he literally comes in and just suffers with us. It’s an embodiment of the suffering. It’s not saying, “I’m going to pull you out of it and everything will be fine.” It’s, “No, I’m going to come and soak myself in it with you.” So Hebrews—“Nothing that you have been tempted with have I not been tempted with.” So it’s that saturation and presence—the fact that you have someone there *while* you’re in the dark— that is the thing that’s powerful. And they don’t leave you, no matter how deep the questioning gets. They’re still there. And that’s the part that’s missing in the Church, I think. And it’s directly connected to what I mean by recovering lament.

1:35:00

MH: Yeah, if you guys have listened to any of the Fern and Audrey episodes, that’s a large part of what they actually do with survivors. When you listen to the latest one... Trey and I spent several days with Fern and Audrey last week, and one of the nice little quip statements that came out of that was, “Deliverance ministry goes looking for a fight.” It’s confrontational. What they do is completely other than that. They do what he just described. They go through the pain and the events of the pain and all this sort of stuff with survivors. That is a great deal about what they do. And it’s so simple and so unspectacular, but it’s so effective in helping the people that wind up on their doorstep. They just do a lot of that. And without getting too much into their own story, they were unable... I think it might change a little bit because of the podcast, but they have been unable to have a church participate in what they do because people just get frightened at the kind of people they’re working with. And they’re basically just alone, but they’re trying to have these people not be alone. So what David said is a lot of actually what they do. It’s not terribly spectacular, and they’re not doing what you think of as traditional deliverance ministry—looking for a fight with some demonic. First of all, that’s not really the problem—that’s very unusual with

people. The problem is actually worse. It'd be easier if it was just a demon. [laughs] But it's someone who's been traumatized by evil, over and over again. That's just worse. You know, give us a *light* case here. Get rid of the... That's why they say that's really rare. Most of the time, what they're doing is just helping people through human evil that has afflicted them repeatedly. And that's a lot of work. That's a *lot* of work. Takes a long time. So it's quite different. I hear what David's saying—that's the example that I'm closest to because I see what they do when we spend time with them, and some of the people they work with.

TS: Alright, well, we just want to thank everybody for coming out. Thank y'all very much. We want to thank David Burnett for joining us, and we want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast. God bless.

[applause]