

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 190

SBL Conference Interviews, Part 1

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**Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)**

**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

**Guests: David Burnett (DB)**

**Marina Westerdahl (MW)** (23:50 time stamp)

**Sam Lamerson (SL)** (47:30)

Mike and Trey once again traveled to Boston for the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). In this first set of conference interviews include getting caught up with David Burnett, now in his first semester of doctoral work at Marquette University. We also chat with Marina Westerdahl, a former student of Mike's at Knox Seminary about to begin doctoral work in Old Testament. Marina's research interests involve the divine council. Lastly, we visit with Sam Lamerson, professor of New Testament at Knox Seminary and fellow traveler with Mike in helping Christians think well about the paranormal.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 190: SBL Conference Interviews, Part 1. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you?

**MH:** Good! Well, here we are. We are in Boston. That means we are *not*...

**TS:** *In Rhode Island* anymore.

**MH:** That's right.

**TS:** Tear drop. But I'm a big fan of Boston. This is my second time in the great city of Boston. Everything is green—Celtics. The land of...

**MH:** And the Red Sox! Don't forget the Red Sox!

**TS:** Bruins and the Red Sox... You may take a tour of Fenway!

**MH:** That's one of my goals—to slip away for an hour and tour Fenway Park.

**TS:** That'll be neat.

**MH:** Yeah, it will be. It's just something I've always wanted to see. Lord willing, I'll be able to do that.

In our first round here, we have some good interviews, obviously. We're going to talk with David Burnett and catch up with David. David is familiar to the podcast audience. We've had him on as a guest. People are familiar with him and his work. He is well into his first semester of doctoral work at Marquette, so we're for sure going to ask him how that's going and what he's doing in terms of research—what he's thinking about. And then we want to talk to Marina Westerdahl. Marina is a beginning doctoral student. She's applying for doctoral programs now, and she has several options. I met her at Knox Seminary when I taught an interterm course on the *Unseen Realm* content. We used that as a textbook. Knox is in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. She was a mom, had a couple of kids, and decided, "I want to go to seminary!" We met there, and now she's applying for doctoral work. So we wanted to talk with her about her experience and some of the things that are really interesting with her, in terms of content. And then, finally, Sam Lamerson on this episode. We interviewed Sam last year, as well. Sam is a New Testament professor at Knox, there at Ft. Lauderdale. Some of you may recall that Sam is also sort of a fellow traveler with some interest in paranormal topics. He has something that I think you're going to get a kick out of that he actually did in Ft. Lauderdale with his own audience to sort of get them interested in why Christians should think about that sort of stuff. We want to talk to him about that. So another good round of interviews here at SBL.

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**MH:** Well, we're back at SBL, and guess who we ran into! [laughter] It's David Burnett!

**DB:** Hey there!

**MH:** Obviously, lots of people on the podcast are familiar with you, David. Why don't you give us an update on what you've been doing?

**DB:** Starting my doctorate at Marquette University. Drowning in work! [laughs]

**MH:** What are the classes you have? Just give us the classes.

**DB:** Okay, so I'm doing three seminars right now. One is Judaism in the Hellenistic World with Joshua Burns. I'm doing Advanced Hebrew with Deidra Dempsey. And then I'm doing Origins of Trinitarianism to Augustine with Michelle Barnes.

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**MH:** Wow. That sounds like the place to be. Okay, I've got to ask you a few questions here. For our audience, explain what happens in a seminar.

**DB:** So in a seminar, you read until your eyes fall out. [laughter] There's an absurd amount of literature—a lot of primary sources, and a lot of secondary literature as well. A lot of articles and books. You read the material and then you come to class expected to have read it all. You're discussing it, and a lot of the lectures and discussions center around the reading. Then you'll have major term papers in those courses, article reviews, things like that. It's a lot of work—more pages than you could physically read, probably. But it's fun.

**MH:** Sure. You just do the best you can.

**DB:** Yeah, we kind of joke that if we didn't love this stuff, we would kill ourselves. [laughter]

**MH:** That brings back memories, actually. What are you using for Advanced Hebrew? Do you have to read through an advanced grammar or are you doing something else?

**DB:** Actually, we do a lot of translation. So it assumes that we've had like two years of Hebrew or so. But we often refer to... Well, we've referred to a number of different grammars.

**MH:** Joüon/Muraoka, Waltke/O'Connor?

5:00

**DB:** Muraoka, yeah... Muraoka is one we've referred to quite frequently. But it's focusing in on the Psalms. So we do translations of Psalms every week. We'll translate 1-2 Psalms a week. It's actually split class because we have a smaller pool of graduate students at Marquette. So half the class is a Psalms class only (that doesn't need Hebrew) and the other half of the class (advanced Hebrew) is doing all the translation work for the class.

**MH:** Each one has their own set of requirements and all that. We did that, too, at Wisconsin.

**DB:** Yeah, that's what we're doing. It's fun! Dr. Dempsey is amazing. She's incredible.

**MH:** The name of one of my novel characters, I have to admit, actually comes from her.

**DB:** Really?

**MH:** Yes, it does! [laughing]

**DB:** No way!

**MH:** I'm serious, yeah.

**DB:** You gotta... you can't just leave me hanging there... what's that about?

**MH:** I read an article or two by her on something when I was writing my first novel, and I just liked the name, so that's what I did.

**DB:** [laughing] Okay, now the whole world knows this! I'm totally going to tell her this!

**MH:** Well, go ahead. You can tell her.

**DB:** That's great.

**MH:** Yeah, you've gotta get names somewhere! You can't just name them after your kids because then you can't...

**DB:** "Hey, you're in my buddy, Mike's, novel. Did you know that?"

**MH:** ... then you can't, like, kill anybody off.

**DB:** You kill her off in the book?

**MH:** She's still alive.

**DB:** [laughing] I was like, "My goodness!"

**MH:** She's alive after two installments, but..

**DB:** "Hey, Dr. Dempsey, good news. You're not killed off in this book that you're in that you don't know about!"

**MH:** I just liked the name.

**DB:** Nice, nice.

**MH:** How have you adjusted to life at Marquette? Because you went from Texas, and now you're in Wisconsin...

**DB:** [laughs] Yeah, talk about a transition. But I haven't felt the bulk of the transition yet. We're not in the deep of winter.

**MH:** You never go outside, is that it? [laughs]

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**DB:** No, I mean... I'm okay with the 30's. It actually feels really good.

**MH:** Just you wait.

**DB:** You can wear sweaters and stuff and it's great. That part is cool. As long as it stayed in the 30's, I'm good. Now, the coldest it's gotten so far was it got 25 or something one day. That was kind of cold, but I was kind of like, "It's not that bad!"

**MH:** No pun intended, that's a "warm-up." Okay?

**DB:** Right. I know, I know. I literally know. Everyone tells me about it. I heard about the polar vortex five years ago or something. Everyone's told me all the horror stories. It's funny, though... When I moved to Wisconsin, I was like, "You Wisconsin people..." (Wisconsinites, I guess they call them)

**MH:** It's better than "Wisconsinians."

**DB:** Yeah, I didn't know what to call them, so I guess I guessed it right. So I was like, "Ya'll are used to this, right? I mean, ya'll are used to the winters." And they're like, "No, we still hate it." [laughter] I was like, "Okay..."

**MH:** Do you have a car?

**DB:** Yeah, I actually bought a Subaru before I moved there.

**MH:** Do you have a heater? All kidding aside, you can get a little heater installed in your engine block, then if you're at different locations, you can plug in.

**DB:** I was told that. The Subaru's have those aluminum engines that heat really quickly for that reason. And, of course, the all-wheel drive. I had to get ready.

**MH:** Looks like you're putting some thought into it.

**DB:** Oh, yeah. I'm prepared. I think. I've got my parka and hats and boots and all that stuff, so I'm ready to go.

**MH:** How much interaction have you had with Dr. Orlov?

**DB:** Oh, a ton. I love... Andre Orlov's the best.

**MH:** That has to be fun.

**DB:** We have SO much fun. He took me to his favorite Indian buffet and we just started talking and two and a half hours later...

**MH:** You had me at "Indian" and "buffet." [laughs]

**DB:** I'm telling you... Oh my gosh. Come to Marquette and we'll go!

**MH:** Yeah, I could take an enemy there and still enjoy myself. [laughter]

**DB:** You have no enemy in Andre. But no, he's incredible. We've had some really great conversations and we email back and forth all the time. He's been on sabbatical this semester, so he comes back next semester. Then hopefully I'll be his TA next semester.

**MH:** Sure.

**DB:** I'll be helping him edit his next book coming out.

**MH:** Without incriminating anyone, your reaction/response to the teaching experience?

10:00

**DB:** Oh yeah, my first lecturing... [laughter] You know, it was really great, actually! I had a really great experience. I sort of was thrown off into the deep end. At Marquette, since it's a Jesuit school, undergrads are required to take Intro to Theology. Mark Johnson, who I TA for, is a theology prof there. He's an Aquinas guy. I was really scared about that when they assigned me to him, because I was like, "I don't know anything about Aquinas, so this is not a good fit!" But they were like, "No, don't worry, don't worry! He's teaching intro classes." And I was like, "Okay, phew!" So I was like, "I don't have to read Thomas Aquinas... that's great!" I'm sure I will at some point.

**MH:** You don't have to read the whole *Summa* while...

**DB:** No, [laughing] I'm not gonna read the whole *Summa*! I'm just not... it's not gonna happen! So he has three Intro to Theology classes in a row from like 9:30 a.m. to 1:45 or something. So I thought I was just going to be totally exhausted because I taught all three in a row. The week that I taught, we were going through the Gospel of John.

**MH:** Do you do discussions or some lecture?

**DB:** I lecture and then throughout it I'll have some open-ended questions to try to stir the pot a little bit. But they just didn't bite a whole lot. It's hard to get them to talk. I'm like, "Are you guys awake?"

**MH:** Are they mostly freshmen?

**DB:** Yeah, freshmen and sophomores. But you know me... I'm pretty jovial.

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**MH:** I know, but that's your answer.

**DB:** Freshmen and sophomores, yeah.

**MH:** They're immune to that.

**DB:** Yeah, they are. [laughter] It's cool, though, because I did get some gaping mouths and wide eyes and stuff once we got toward the end and connected some stuff that I showed them in the beginning—all the intertextual stuff. They wouldn't know those words, but bringing out the themes in John, like the *Akedah*/binding of Isaac in the crucifixion. "Why is Jesus bound? Why is he carrying his cross? This isn't in any of the Gospels! What's going on here?" So looking at stuff like that... Jesus as the new temple, Jesus as The Man—the human one, the gardener... picking up on all these Adamic themes. They got really excited once I started making those connections. A lot of the kids had sort of grown up in Catholic school and stuff, so they had a lot of exposure to Scripture but just never studied it—probably just in Catechesis or whatever. So it's really cool to sort of blow the lids off for them. I had some students that stayed after that said, "Man, we heard this 'Lamb of God' all the time and the liturgy all the time and we had *no idea* what it meant!" And it's like, "Well, you do now!" So that was cool. It was a really cool experience. I like being at Marquette because you have a lot of privileged kids who just were kind of spoiled and didn't realize that all of this stuff is there. They've never studied it for themselves. And so to try to break the lid off and show them some of it was cool. You always have students that couldn't care less. You try to get them all involved. Realistically, I can't do much teaching there. We're just too busy. Dr. Johnson has been incredible about realizing how much work I have to do and not burdening me with a lot. And Marquette is really great about that. They really take care of their doctoral students.

**MH:** So when Orlov comes back and you'll be the TA, that's just primarily going to be the editing task? If it works out, that's pretty much...

**DB:** Yeah, that's pretty much my task. We've talked about it and the theme of the book and stuff.

**MH:** What's it on?

**DB:** Do we want to keep that under wraps right now? Because I haven't talked to him about that, so I don't want to share it if he hasn't shared it himself.

**MH:** My next question is not because I have any knowledge of the book (because I don't), but I'm planning on going to the Enoch Seminar Saturday night. Have you ever been to it? That the first question. I have to think Orlov is going to be at this thing.

**DB:** Of course, yeah.

**MH:** So I'm hoping it's more than just wine-and-cheese kind of stuff and chit-chat, that they're actually going to talk about research projects. Correct?

**DB:** Aren't they doing a thing for Michael Stone Festschrift?

**MH:** I don't know. The description I saw said that they're going to be talking about new directions in Enoch research or something like that. It's a Saturday night reception.

**DB:** Honestly, I saw the Enoch Seminar stuff but I didn't look at all the topics.

**MH:** It just said, "Everybody's welcome" and so on and so forth. So I'm thinking I'd like to sit in on that.

**DB:** Oh, I would love to be there. Well, let's go! I'll email Dr. Orlov and see.

**MH:** I've been to receptions before at SBL, and they turn into business meetings real fast, so I'm not really up for that, even if the food's good! [laughs]

**DB:** We just go for the drinks and the food... I mean...

**MH:** I want to hear about Enoch stuff.

15:00

**DB:** I was really excited that the Enoch Seminar thing is overlapping with SBL stuff. I didn't know they were even doing that until yesterday, I think. My buddy Rob Kashow from Brown University posted that he was in a session at Harvard on it, and I was like, "Man, I want to be there!" So I want to try to go.

**MH:** That sounds encouraging, then.

**DB:** I've told Dr. Orlov that's a goal of mine in the future. I think you have to have your PhD before you can be a member of Enoch Seminar.

**MH:** I don't know, it just said, "All are welcome," so I figured...

**DB:** But I want to be involved with it in the future.

**MH:** Right. But they could have said that with that assumption, because it's here at SBL. We'll see. We'll find out. Well, are you angling for anything specific as far as a dissertation?

**DB:** Oh, yeah.

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**MH:** Do you have it narrowed to one thing or...

**DB:** Yeah, it's the trajectory we've dealt with.

**MH:** The apocalyptic stuff.

**DB:** Yeah. A lot of the listeners who heard the resurrection/death of the gods and my stuff on Romans 4... These are all pieces to the puzzle. But I think the 1 Corinthians 15... I've done more research on it since I presented last year on that. I've had a lot of emails about it—a lot of messages and conversations about it from other scholars who say, "Huh, never thought of that!" After being cited in Theissen's book, I actually got into some interesting conversations with some other scholars about this project. So that's going to be a big portion, I think. It's going to be a big chapter in my dissertation—that topic.

**MH:** Did you ever have a follow-up conversation with the guy... It was last year. I think it was in the same section you spoke in. In part of the Q&A, it was either your paper and you said something and this guy heard it, or it was a Q&A where there was some interaction. There was a guy from Harvard there who came up to you afterwards and said...

**DB:** I think he was from Yale. He was from Yale.

**MH:** Okay. But he was like, "This will really help what I'm doing." Did you ever hear..

**DB:** Christopher. Yeah, it's weird you brought that up because we literally just ran into each other. He was coming back from getting his name tag, and I just went and got mine. He was like, "David, David!" And I was like, "Yeah, Christopher! What's up?" So we stopped and talked for a little bit. Congratulations to Christopher, by the way. He got a ten-year track job at Cornell College. So congratulations to him. He's out of the job market, finally.

**MH:** That's a wonderful place to be.

**DB:** He's like, "I can actually enjoy SBL now, instead of just posturing the whole time." [laughter] It's great. I'm very excited for him. But yeah, I told him was a big encouragement to me, especially coming from Yale. He told me I was connecting dots of how these texts are being used by Paul here in ways that he could never figure out how it all fits together.

**MH:** Yeah, he was real excited last year.

**DB:** Yeah, he got real excited and he got me more excited because it was like, "Wow, someone's seeing this!" I'm still trying to convince Dr. Cover at Marquette about it. I think he's slowly...

**MH:** What's his first name?

**DB:** Michael Cover.

**MH:** I knew another Cover, but go ahead.

**DB:** He's as sharp as sharp gets, man. I'm serious. I can't speak highly enough of Dr. Cover.

**MH:** What's the obstacle?

**DB:** To be fair, we've only talked about the Deuteronomy 4 sort of background to the creature list there in 1 Corinthians 15. We talked about that the last time we sat down. He kept going, "This is clearly Genesis. This is creation stuff. This is Adam." And I said, "Well, Deuteronomy is also sort of creation." And we talked about overlapping creation and Exodus, and he wasn't buying that too quickly. He was like, "Ahh... you may be trying to put an unnecessary layer in there that's not there." But he hasn't heard the whole argument, and he's forgotten more than I'll ever learn, probably. So to have this little peon discussing this with him... But he's so kind. He's so thoughtful. He's so nuanced. And he really is a joy to have there on the third floor in Marquette Hall, because his schedule is crazy and he has a family and he still makes time for us. He's a virtuous man. He's a priest in the Anglican Communion—from the Dallas area, actually. His dad taught at DTS, actually.

**MH:** Wow.

**DB:** Yeah, isn't that crazy?

**MH:** See, the other Cover I know is Robin, who had a PhD from Harvard. He was an Ancient Near Eastern Studies guy. He taught at Dallas for a while.

**DB:** That's his dad!

**MH:** Okay, so where's his dad at?

**DB:** That's Michael Cover's dad!

**MH:** Wow. So where's his dad at now?

**DB:** I don't know; we haven't talked about it. He had parted ways with DTS a long time ago.

**MH:** It was in the late 80's, early 90's, yeah. He was there when I was there, but I never got to take a class from him. That's the guy.

20:00 **DB:** That's literally his son!

**MH:** Wow, boy...

**DB:** He's got a pedigree of pedigrees. The guy is...

**MH:** Now I'm feeling a little bit old. [laughs]

**DB:** Well, yeah. I think it's Yale-Harvard-Notre Dame is his pedigree. He was a Lilly Fellow. He won the Achtemeier Award at SBL for New Testament. I lucked out big time, being there with him! Our faculty at Marquette is outstanding. It is a place to study Second Temple and Christian Origins. Man, it's the spot.

**MH:** Yeah, well, I was hoping you'd get in there, as you know, obviously.

**DB:** Yeah, you know that was my first choice, so I was very happy. I really have a lot of thanks, which goes out to Andre Orlov because we really connected last year at SBL. He was really digging my research proposal and we hit it off, and it was sort of a peas-in-a-pod type of situation.

**MH:** Last question... You got the Tuesday morning slot, and I've been there before.

**DB:** Yes, I have the worst slot of SBL. I know. The last slot.

**MH:** There's two ways to look at that. There are fewer papers, so that means if you're staying, there are fewer options. So you might actually get a full room. I read a paper Tuesday morning once...

**DB:** [laughing] I'm not sure if I want a full room! This paper is more chill than my last one.

**MH:** Or it's like half the people there are just, "Well, this sounded better than the other thing. I don't really know what either of them is about!"

**DB:** I joke about it, but we actually have a really good session. The whole session is on 2 Corinthians 12—the ascent to heaven.

**MH:** If you're staying and even if you're just broadly New Testament, you're going to have people wind up in that.

**DB:** So if you're interested in New Testament or Paul or apocalyptic or Second Temple or ascent and visions and all that stuff, or apocalyptic epistemology, that's the spot. That's a great section to be in.

**MH:** This'll be the last question, then. Is there a paper that you're angling to hear? One in particular that you can pull out of your head? Like, "Oh, I saw this and I can't wait to go."

**DB:** Yeah, that's tough.

**MH:** So there's no paper like "Watchers and Bastard Spirits in Galatians..." [laughing]

**DB:** Tyler Stuart, yeah. Fellow Marquette man.

**MH:** As soon as we saw that, it's like, "Oh, yeah!"

**DB:** Yeah, more Marquette connection there. No, none of that...

**MH:** Nothing that sounds that good! [laughs]

**DB:** Not of that caliber, I think. I really, really like Tyler Stuart's work. He's incredibly intelligent, and he's a good man, too. There's nothing that just screams out in our sort of wheelhouses, but there are quite a few papers that I am interested in. It's just there's too many right now to sort of rattle off.

**MH:** There's one on *gibborim* in Septuagint and... I can't remember what the title of it was.

**DB:** What section is that in? I don't even know if I saw that.

**MH:** I don't know. I'd have to look at my schedule. But I have maybe four or five that I have written down that I'd really like to get to, including the Enoch Seminar. I was just wondering if there was something that maybe I missed, and if you brought it up it's like, "Oh yeah..."

**DB:** I'm sorry, I'm still frazzled from all my work. This is the first break I've had is my plane ride here! [laughs]

**MH:** I know, I know.

**DB:** I'll sit down and actually go over my schedule tonight—what I'm actually doing.

**MH:** Okay, well thanks for spending a few minutes with us.

**DB:** It's a pleasure always.

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23:50 **MH:** Well, we're here at SBL in Boston now. Our first interview is with Marina Westerdahl. I'm going to ask you to introduce yourself. We've known each other for a couple of years, but it's better coming from you to tell the story.

**MW:** Sure. I'm Marina. I'm originally from Argentina. I came when I was 12. I've been married about 18 years and have two kids. I originally decided to go to seminary about 5 1/2 or 6 years ago. I'd been a stay-at-home mom, I'd run my own business, and since I was very young, I just loved studying—studying Scripture, reading books. I was very involved in ministry. There was an opportunity to go to a local seminary (Knox Theological Seminary), so that was the beginning of my journey.

**MH:** That's where we met—at Knox. I did an interterm course. I don't even remember what it was called, but I know we went through...

**MW:** Something "Spiritual Theology..."

25:00 **MH:** Yeah, something like that. Sam Lamerson is the president there. He gave it a title and I said I would come. We wound up going through a lot of the kind of content that's in *Unseen Realm*—Divine Council stuff. Let's just talk about that. What was your experience in that?

**MW:** It was really Providential when you came. I had been reading some of your work. I'd been taking quite a heavy course load. I was taking a class on Ephesians, a class on John Calvin, and Old Testament. What happened was I was reading a lot through... All those three classes were taking me to Deuteronomy. I remember reading through the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32), and the experience that I had (which was amazing, and I know you mentioned you had a similar experience with Psalm 82)... I was reading through Deuteronomy and verse 8-9 just jumped off the page.

**MH:** It's good you were reading... Were you reading ESV?

**MW:** ESV, yes! [laughter]

**MH:** Good you picked that one.

**MW:** The first thing I did was compare. I went and opened my NIV, my NASB, and the King James, and they all had a different translation, which I would have totally missed. So I know that was Providential. I had grown up in church and had read my Bible and I had never seen those two verses. What happened was that I couldn't get over what the verse said about God dividing the nations of the earth according to the number of the sons of God. I had so many questions and I decided to do my paper in Old Testament on the divergent translations from the Masoretic, the Septuagint, the Qumran Scrolls... So that led me to your work.

**MH:** The *Bib-Sac* article... you probably found that.

**MW:** Yes, I was doing all my research. Your name was coming up, and so I was reading anything that I could find that you'd written on that topic. So this was fall semester of 2015 and I find out in January that Dr. Heiser is coming to teach! [laughter] I was like, "WHAT?!"

**MH:** That must mean something.

**MW:** Yes! I was like, "Wow, he's coming to teach *me!*" It was really exciting.

**MH:** Well, it was fun. We had a good time. It was a small number, as interterms usually are. It was a lot of fun. There were good questions. We covered a lot of ground in just a few days.

**MW:** Oh, it blew my mind. There was so much I had never seen or even thought about.

**MH:** You had my fifteen years sort of scrunched into what, a week and a half?

**MW:** Three days.

**MH:** Yeah! [laughs] I hadn't heard some of the details of that story, but that's pretty neat. So you're in this program, you take the course, and you complete whatever program you were in. What was it?

**MW:** It was a Masters in Biblical and Theological Studies.

**MH:** Okay. And then you decide you want more punishment. [laughter]

**MW:** Yes.

**MH:** So tell us about that.

**MW:** Well, I had not considered doing doctorate work. I was just going to go get my Masters and join a ministry and be a mom, and I fell in love with research. I really did. And this topic of who the sons of God are... It just led me to a whole new world of this underlying theology that's in Scripture that I had missed my whole life. I was re-reading not just the Old Testament, but the New Testament—Paul's theology about the powers and principalities. Another class I was taking at that time was in Ephesians—powers and principalities! So I began to ask myself, "Well, Paul didn't have a New Testament. Where did he get the powers and principalities concept?" Those terms... obviously it was the Old Testament. So I began to go back and then... is there a link between these? Just wanting to continue learning and finding not just the biblical studies aspect, but what

theological implications are there for these sons of God? I think there are many. I haven't, obviously, started my doctorate work yet, but the more I read and the more I think of this topic, I realize that even in eschatological terms that Jesus didn't come just for forgiveness of sins—there's the cosmic reason. All of Paul's theology came alive even more by understanding a little more of the identity of these sons of God.

30:00

**MH:** We were talking and it was mentioned in earlier interviews that we did... Podcast listeners have heard bits and pieces of that. Like, when Paul talks about the resurrection, we typically think of, "Oh, I get a new body, won't that be neat?" But five or six times he feels compelled by something. When he thinks the thought of the resurrection, his mind goes to the defeat/de-legitimization of the powers, the authorities, the rulers... Why does he connect those two things? Because you never hear it that way. But, again, if he might have done it once, he sort of had a bad day or he wanted to vary the message, but a half a dozen times he thinks of A, and then B is this "sons of God" stuff.

**MW:** Right.

**MH:** Why is that? Where does that come from? You get these connection points all over the place that you don't expect to find them, and you'd never see them unless you have the matrix in your head and you kind of know what you're looking for. I know you're trying to work out the details of your doctoral study—applications, interviews, all that stuff. What are your research interests? It's early, so you don't really have to have a topic, but you've got to be thinking about a couple things.

**MW:** Well, I'm definitely interested in not just the identity, but the theological implications... I would like to do some work between both the Old and the New Testaments. I'm looking right now at having an Old Testament supervisor and a New Testament supervisor. But it's also important that both have experience in the Intertestamental writings and literature, because there seems to be a progression of terms. There's a link there in the language. That's sort of what I would like to study. It's not clear.

**MH:** Right. But what you're doing (I'm just going to point this out for our listeners) is smart. You just mentioned, "Well, hey it's important that my advisors have some cross-fertilization here." Where chances are reasonable that not just maybe one person on your committee, but a few of them have run into this material. I mention that because you talk to a lot of New Testament professors, for instance, about Divine Council stuff and how that bleeds over into the New Testament, and they have no idea what you're talking about. It doesn't mean they're dumb. They have PhD's, they're good thinkers, they're good researchers. But when you get to doctoral work, you can really fall victim to tunnel vision, where you get funneled into one little area—whether you're interested or not, or whether you feel like I've gotta do this to have a dissertation topic that so-and-so

can supervise. There are a lot of people who go through that and are never exposed to wider topic areas, and they literally can get a PhD and teach 10, 15, 20 years somewhere and have never heard of this. I've had a New Testament professor once email me about the citation in Hebrews... If you're into Hebrews, you sort of know there's a reference to the gods in Hebrews 1, but it doesn't come from the Masoretic Text. Even in the Septuagint, it's a little fuzzy. So this guy, who's a seasoned New Testament scholar, emailed me one day and said, "You know, I know this is in the Qumran stuff and there's something going on in Deuteronomy 32. This looks like where the citation comes from that the writer of Hebrews was thinking of. Does this have anything to do with that Divine Council stuff?" [laughter] It's like, "Yeah... Ding, ding, ding!" But he had never really hit it and thought about it. So for you to be thinking ahead that, "Hey, it would be nice to have someone who sort of knows what I'm talking about and knows what I want to think about," that's really wise.

**MW:** Thank you.

**MH:** So what's been your experience since you've had your cage rattled? How about your experience talking to friends, other believers, the home Bible study thing, church? Have you dared to bring any of this up? [laughing]

**MW:** I get looks when I do bring it up, especially at church. I've discussed it, of course, with family members and friends. It's almost like you can only share a certain amount maybe. But at church, especially, they might look at me like, "Wow."

35:00

**MH:** "What happened to you?" [laughs]

**MW:** Yes. And the one thing which was my question was, "Well, what about the *Shema*? What about the oneness of God? Are you talking about other gods?" That makes people very nervous, especially in Christian circles. So I have found that I have to be careful in what I say and realize that, perhaps, not everybody gets as excited about this as I do.

**MH:** Or is even really ready. I'm sure you have the feeling, like I do so many times: "Well, I'd love to answer that question, but we have to talk about these ten other things first before the answer would make any sense, or so that you're not troubled by the answer." So you get into that. I assume you haven't been written out of anybody's will?

**MW:** No. [laughter]

**MH:** And you're still at the church you were at before you started all this?

**MW:** Well, that's another story. There were some changes there, but it's for different reasons.



**MH:** Well, that's good. Just so that you didn't sort of get drummed out or anything.

**MW:** No, no, no. But I have to realize that it took me a long time and I didn't see it, and I do see what happened... I had been in seminary for two and a half years already and I had never had a professor even mention this. So that kind of helps me realize that I have to be patient. Many people may not be interested. And it's okay—they can still be good Christians and not go into this depth.

**MH:** Absolutely.

**MW:** For me, I find it fascinating and I want to keep learning about it and continue finding, perhaps, theological implications for this. What I love in some of the interviews that you did with Fern and Audrey is that's a practical outcome of this very wonderful and deep teaching. I think that there are, perhaps (thinking long-term) practical outcomes to pursuing the knowledge of this theology.

**MH:** The Naked Bible Podcast has a lot of homeschool moms in it. [laughs]

**MW:** Really? I didn't know.

**MH:** A lot of moms, just generally. It's kind of amazing. As we travel (Trey and I, and even by myself), you get to meet people and you hear that they listen to the podcast, but the variety is just kind of crazy. I was at a conference two weeks ago and I'm talking to somebody in the hallway and then somebody walks by and just stops and looks and recognized me, I guess, from the website. He's from London. So then that guy goes away and we resume our conversation and it happened again. And that guy's from Norway.

**MW:** [laughs] That's awesome!

**MH:** Yeah, it's just really... We were doing some interviews last night, and after we were done, somebody stops us and says, "Hey, I'm at such-and-such institution and my students love your podcast. I listen to it, too. We read the books." North Carolina, all over the United States, it's really kind of amazing... the reach. We all know what the internet is, but until you're sort of actually doing something that involves the internet and people actually tap into it...

**MW:** My husband listens to your podcast, and many times he's like, "Oh, I was on my way to work and guess what Heiser said?" [laughter]

**MH:** "What did he do now?" What would you say to somebody like yourself (whatever station of life) and they're thinking about "Maybe now or maybe a few years down the road, I want to throw my hat in the ring. I want to actually get

formal education or take courses." What would you say to them? I assume your experience overall has been a good one.

**MW:** Absolutely.

**MH:** So how would you advise someone? What are the do's, the don'ts...

**MW:** Someone interested in seminary?

**MH:** Someone interested in seminary, yeah.

**MW:** I would say this: You get through seminary on your knees. For me, it's been so much prayer. When I began, the types of books that I was reading...

**MH:** That would be quite different, yeah.

40:00

**MW:** I'd always been a reader, but the level of reading and the amount of reading was overwhelming. So there's an adjustment period. Be patient with yourself. Only take one or two classes at a time if that's all you can handle. And just approach Scripture with a posture of humility. Realize that there is so much you don't know.

**MH:** That's really important. And you're going to find that out going through your doctoral work. A lot of people have the impression that people with PhD's sort of... You'll meet these types, but anybody with a PhD sort of thinks they know everything. That's actually very contrary to most of my experience. Again, you will meet those people that sort of give you that impression, but overwhelmingly, they just get it. "I know a lot about this one area because it's under the umbrella of Old Testament and I know a lot of this because it was my dissertation and I had to read this, that, and the other thing, and basically tried to cover everything that's been written on that, and that consumed my life for 5, 6, 7 years, so that's really what I know." But if they sort of step back and look at that, it's like, "Yeah, that's what I know, but this other stuff over here... I'm going to be real careful what I say." So a lot of the PhD's I know are very cognizant of that. So that's good advice. It's almost like... I hate to say it this way, but I think you run into more of that when you have people who sort of know enough—not to be dangerous—but to know more than the people they're ministering to. There's an arrogance problem there—there's a little bit of a pride problem—but they're also sort of taught to think that way, or they're kind of victimized because their people expect them to be the answer person. As you get four or five years of that, you wonder, "Well, if I don't know, can I make my way through it? Because I don't want to create the impression that I don't know things."

**MW:** It's better to say, "You know what? I don't know. I'm not expert in this field."

**MH:** It is. Right up front.

**MW:** I actually think more highly of that person that will say... It's true, you can only zero in on a specific area because we don't have infinite intellect and time.

**MH:** How did your seminary time affect your kids at all? Were they encouraging? Were they sort of ambivalent?

**MW:** I took all my classes, basically, during the day while they were at school. My daughter just started 9th grade and my son just started 7th grade, so when I started seminary about 5-1/2 or 6 years ago, they were little but they were in school. And they were okay. But I realized as time went by that it was actually a really positive thing because my daughter, for speech class had to choose... My son picked my husband and so my daughter picked me. She did an "I look up to my mom because she studies and she's learning different languages." I realized that it actually helped inspire my kids. There have been times, maybe, where "Mommy has to study or write a paper, so we're not going to go here or there," but overall, it's been very good—very positive.

**MH:** It's good to get them young. When you said "inspire the kids," I thought of my... I'm going to not name this person because... [laughs]

**MW:** They may be listening!

**MH:** I know someone who went to school... didn't need the degree, but went to school to try to motivate their kid. "I'm going to take the same courses and degree..."

**MW:** With their kids?

**MH:** They weren't always in... but they took the same program, thinking, "If Dad's in there doing, that's going to motivate them to put a little fire under them." Didn't work! [laughs] Didn't work at all. It was like, the kid would look at him like, "I don't know why you're doing this." The fella I know wouldn't quit, either. When he realized this wasn't working, it wasn't like, "Oh, well, I tried that and now I can walk away." He actually went through the whole degree program and didn't need the degree because he already had a good job in something else. This is somebody in my wider family, so I would hear the details of this struggle and think, "Why don't you just drop out? You don't need this!"

**MW:** What was the degree in?

**MH:** It was like computer science or something.

**MW:** Oh wow—so it was hard!

45:00

**MH:** He didn't know anything... He would tell me, "I'm going in and sitting there and we're having a test, and before I can even read the instructions, I hear [laughing] these younger kids just typing out this code." He's thinking, "I can't keep up." But he wouldn't quit.

**MW:** Wow.

**MH:** But it didn't work. [laughter] The story is, it didn't work.

**MW:** Maybe, I don't know... Did his kid continue in school?

**MH:** He did continue and he finished two years or so later, but it didn't propel him to work harder in class or take more classes or get out sooner. It almost had zero effect—maybe comic effect, I don't know.

Well, thanks for spending a little time with us, just to hear your story. I hope it does inspire some out in the audience. I do get a lot of inquiries about, "Should I take classes?" A lot of it is language stuff. People want to learn how to handle languages. "Should I go to school? I'm thinking about going to seminary. What should I be looking out for?" And you have your normal obstacles—time, expense, and all that—but there are these intangibles, too. If you really feel driven and you can see the use of it at the other end and you're convinced that the Lord wants you to do that, then that's what you need to do.

**MW:** My advice would be, for me at the time, I was really interested in apologetics. I was leading Bible studies for believers and non-believers. So that's what interested me. Knox happened to be offering a class taught by Dr. Lamerson in apologetics in the mornings. So even though I was scared to go to seminary (I was very nervous, to be honest, and I actually fought it for a couple of years)...

**MH:** So that was your first class?

**MW:** The one class that was available in the mornings was apologetics. So I signed up and I realized, "Wow, I actually maybe can do this!"

**MH:** Right, you can do this. It's good to open with Sam, too.

**MW:** Yes, he's a great teacher. So after that, I was hooked. Don't over-think it. Don't try to take all these hard classes right away. Kind of start out slow. That would be my advice.

**MH:** Kind of get your feet wet. Well, that's good. Thanks again!

**MW:** Thank you for having me.

**MH:** You bet.

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47:30

**MH:** Well, we're back at SBL, and we have a familiar name with us, at least to our audience: Sam Lamerson. It's nice to get a little bit of an update. So, Sam, please introduce yourself for anybody new.

**SL:** Hi, I'm Sam Lamerson. I teach at Knox Theological Seminary in Ft. Lauderdale. Mike and I have been talking about UFO's and Bigfoot for a long time.

**MH:** [laughing] Yeah, we do that here at SBL, too!

**SL:** That's pretty much why I come.

**MH:** [laughs more] You want to ferret out all the abductees, right?

**SL:** Exactly. I'm still looking.

**MH:** Believe it or not, I've had scholars at this meeting come up to me and say, "I want to tell you my story because I know you won't out me." I've actually had that happen here.

**SL:** I've had it happen in other places, but never here.

**MH:** Since you jumped right into that, you've been doing something interesting in Ft. Lauderdale. Is it at your church, through your church, or some peripheral...

**SL:** It's sort of through the seminary. We have this thing called Lunch and Learn, where I just pick a topic and speak every couple of months. For Halloween, I wanted to do something on the Bible and the paranormal. So we talked about ghosts and UFO's. In terms of ghosts, we talked about what happened with Saul and the witch of Endor, and then with UFO's, I talked a little about what the paranormal world is and how we as Christians we believe in at least some sort of an invisible realm, and that there are evil beings in that invisible realm, and that the evil one may be much happier to have us believe in aliens than to have us believe in evil beings that are really going to harm us.

**MH:** So how is that received? How many came out for that?

**SL:** Probably 150 came out.

**MH:** Wow.

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50:00

**SL:** We usually have about 30 or 40, so it was many, many more than we had ever had before. I had a few people come up to me afterwards and want to tell me their story. Of course, there were people who wanted to ask questions. I didn't allow them to ask questions in front of the whole crowd, because you never know what could happen there and I'm pushing the envelope as it is. I don't want to make things any worse. But many, many people said, "I'm so glad to hear somebody who knows what they're talking about speak about these issues," because so often it's just ignored by the church. We know that there's something there, but the church is almost (as you say in your book) materialistic in the way that it looks at the world. We almost get to the point where we say, "All that stuff about the invisible realm is true, but we don't really want to talk about that." And that's a very serious problem.

**MH:** Yeah, I've had... It's kind of interesting because at one of these kinds of events, I've had professors from different departments at evangelical schools come up to me and lament just exactly what you described. Some of them even went as far as to say that this is going to be a confrontational issue in the future—that we're going to have sessions on whether we're going to believe what the Bible says about the supernatural world or not! Which is kind of startling, but you can see it happening with some of the stuff like the Historical Adam, or these kinds of discussions. This one isn't going to become any less popular, and it's so embedded in pop culture. So yeah, I could see that happening, which would be both interesting and kind of alarming at the same time, given...

**SL:** I think that some of it is just that the average minister is sort of afraid of it. They don't know what to say. So they just kind of let it go. It never makes its way down to the ground level. There are people talking about these things and thinking about these things, but a lot of it never makes its way down to the bottom shelf for people to sort of get the easy cookies and understand what's going on.

**MH:** So what sessions were you able to get to so far? Anything that stood out as, "Boy, that was interesting" or "That was really helpful" or "We needed to hear one on that?"

**SL:** I went to a session yesterday on apologetics and textual criticism, which was really good in terms of how many, many evangelical apologists misuse the statistics of textual criticism, taking them, essentially, from F.F. Bruce's book, which is 75 years old. And they often—even when they update the statistics—only update the statistics which are in favor of the Bible. F.F. Bruce says there are 5,000 Greek New Testament manuscripts, so they'll update that to "nearly 6,000," but they don't update the number of manuscripts that have been found for Josephus or Philo or any other documents like that. So it's essentially unfair and it does damage to the gospel when other scholars look at that and say, "You're just not being truthful with the text here."

**MH:** Like different readings. Of course, you're going to get issues of lexicography with new Greek manuscripts and other texts. That's interesting.

**SL:** Yeah, it was very, very helpful. I went to Greece this summer with Dan Wallace, where we prepared some ancient Greek manuscripts for photography. His ministry is CSNTM (Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts). They try to photograph as many Greek manuscripts as possible. One of the interesting things that I found was the way that the text is presented to you affects the way that you read it, and so if you see a text without verses, it will affect the way that you read it. I'm becoming more and more convinced that the versification of the Bible is one of the worst things that has ever happened to it.

**MH:** If it's broken up into verses, it's like you pull out one or two... "These are my verses for the day." Or you sort of intuitively might assume that this is a thought unit, somewhat related, but not related at all to what precedes and follows... yeah.

**SL:** Without any understanding of what the context is. Without any understanding of what came before it or what comes after it. It causes us to read the New Testament and the whole Bible in a way that we would never, ever read another book. That's crazy. We would never pick up a John Grisham novel, begin in the middle of it, read a paragraph, and say, "Okay, I'm done for the day." Then pick it up the next day and turn to another page and read a sentence and say, "Okay, that's good for the day." We would say that's a crazy way to read a book. Yet that's the way that many people read the Bible!

**MH:** You wouldn't even do that to a non-fiction book. Maybe a textbook because they're typically written according to an outline, but if you have a reference book or any sort of standard non-fiction prose, you wouldn't do that.

**SL:** You would realize that context is king and that if you can't understand what's going on in the whole chapter or on the whole page, then you're probably going to miss what that one sentence means.

**MH:** Are you teaching anything new, anything old?

**SL:** I'm still teaching Greek. I love teaching Greek. It's just a wonderful... It's the greatest language in the world, and I love it. I also teach New Testament Survey. I haven't taught New Testament Survey in a while because of my other things that I'm doing, so I'm real excited about teaching New Testament at Knox Seminary. If you'd like to hear anything that I have to say, just go to [www.knoxseminary.edu](http://www.knoxseminary.edu) and there are all kinds of... That talk I did about ghosts and the Bible is up on our website, and there are all kinds of other things up there, as well.

55:00

**MH:** So what would you recommend for a survey... maybe getting into the New Testament. What kind of resource would you recommend, and have you seen anything on the tables here that you might be adopting?

**SL:** There are a lot of interesting things, but one of the things I saw yesterday or the day before was this Reader's Bible. It doesn't have verses and it doesn't have chapters, and so it's interesting in that it doesn't say "The Bible" on the cover of it. It's the New Testament. And it's essentially the Message translation broken up with no chapter divisions. So you read the letter to the Ephesians or you read the letter to Philemon as if it's a real letter. Then you can bring people together and say, "Instead of having a Bible study, let's have a book club. This is the book that we're going to read. We'll all read it together and then we'll talk about what it has to say." And I think people are much less afraid of a book club than they are a Bible study, and even seekers might come when you're just saying, "This is a book. We're going to read it together and we're not going to condemn anybody, we're just going to read it and see what it has to say and how it speaks to us."

**MH:** It sounds like it would be a good conversation-starter to somebody who's really unchurched. That's an interesting idea. Who is the publisher for that?

**SL:** I'm sorry, off the top of my head I don't remember. Maybe I could find it and email it to you and you could put it in here.

**MH:** That would be interesting. I'm going to troll all the book tables, like I usually do. I've only hit maybe 10% of them at this point.

**SL:** So many books, so little time. That's the problem here. [laughter]

**MH:** Yeah, there are dozens and dozens and dozens of publishers here. I've made the comment before that a lot of people come to this because it's the only time you're going to get a discount from some of these high-end places, so this is the thing to do. Even if you never go to the papers, if you live in the area, you can pay a single-day fee and go in and get books at a discount that you'll never see anywhere else. So is there anything personally that's sort of newsworthy—something you're having fun with?

**SL:** I just had a granddaughter, so that's incredible. Her name is Ella Grace, and I'm going to call her "EI" [laughter] after *Stranger Things*.

**MH:** Does she have any powers?

**SL:** She can cry, I know that. That's her biggest power right now. I'm still doing magic here and there, making a few bucks on the side and making people laugh, so that's always going well.

**MH:** So this is your first grandchild?



**SL:** This is my first grandchild, yeah—El. That's exciting. We're hoping to get a "Will" next.

**MH:** [laughing] There you go! Or a "Mike." Maybe not...

**SL:** One of them.

**MH:** Well, thanks for spending a few minutes with us. I know you have another appointment that you've got to get to, and I think he's standing right there to your left. So again, thanks for taking a little time with us.

**SL:** No problem. Thank you! See you later, bye.

**MH:** Bye.

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**TS:** All right, Mike. Well, I feel for David, having the last draw, I guess... I don't know what you call it, but the last talk on Tuesday morning. Hopefully people will turn out for that.

**MH:** Yeah, that's when the conference ends, and so lots of people are gone. But like I told him, I had that slot once and it worked out really well. Hopefully it'll go well for him and he'll get a good crowd—maybe get a heckler or two in there, too. [laughter]

**TS:** Good deal. I hope everyone enjoyed it, and I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.