

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 200

Global Reach

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Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Guests: Charlie Curtis (CC) (2:40 time stamp)

Donald Mmari (DM)

Michael Burke (MB) (32:10)

Bell

David Muniz (DM) (56:35)

Bruna

Fitor Muça (FM)

Our 200th episode celebrates the reach of the podcast and that of Dr. Heiser's books, *The Unseen Realm* and *Supernatural*. The Naked Bible Podcast has dedicated listeners all over the world. Many found the podcast because of Dr. Heiser's books. This episode celebrates both the impact of solid, biblical content in the lives of listeners and readers, and their effort to spread that content to others. Mike and Trey talk to folks doing ministry in the Middle East (Michael, Bell), Tanzania, Africa (Charles, Donald), and Tirana, Albania (David, Bruna, and Fitor).

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 200! I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how're you doing this week? Here we are Mike: 200. Can you believe it?

MH: Should I be honest? [laughter] Not really! But here we are, nevertheless.

TS: Seems like we were just at 100, and here we are at 200. It's amazing how time does not stop, I'll tell you.

MH: That's what I was thinking: How in the world? We were just at 100. What are we doing here?

TS: And I keep thinking I'm going to add cute sound effects and do all kinds of cute things for our 200th, but it just sneaks up on you and...

MH: I can record Mori snarling or... He does do that. He tries to act ferocious. We could do that.

TS: Yeah, well.

MH: You know, if I say something you don't like, we could just put the snarl in there.

TS: There you go. Yeah, we need to come up with something. But again... We haven't missed a weekend yet! Hats off to you, sir. We keep cranking them out, so we appreciate everybody...

MH: We've been close a couple times, but it's come together.

TS: We appreciate everybody still listening to us.

MH: That's probably the greater achievement right there. It needs the lion's share of attention—the people who actually listen, who have stuck with us.

TS: Yeah, that's kind of our theme. We again thought it would be good to interview people who use the content. This podcast represents three continents. We're going to hear from groups of people all over the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and just everywhere. It's crazy.

MH: Yep—Middle East, Africa, and more specifically in Europe, Albania. I mean, who in the world thought... Did we ever sit down and have a conversation, Trey, about, "Boy, we need to do this podcast because people in Albania are going to be listening? We just get people all over the world. But the Albanian group is pretty special. We're going to get into why in this episode.

TS: Absolutely. Without further ado, Mike, let's just get into these interviews!

2:40

MH: Well, we have with us Charlie Curtis, and I'm going to let Charlie introduce himself in a moment. He has a connection, of course, to our content and the books (*Supernatural*, *Unseen Realm*), the podcast, and whatnot. Charlie does ministry in Tanzania. One of the translation projects for Supernatural has been in the language of Swahili, with a translator on that end in Tanzania. He and Beth have gone over to Tanzania and done ministry there, teaching the content. That's the connection to us and to this show. We wanted to have him on to just describe what it is that's happening over there—the reception of the content, how it's affecting people, what he does in terms of ministry, and that sort of thing. So, Charlie, go ahead and introduce yourself and we'll chat about what you do.

CC: Again, it's Charles Curtis. I've been involved with our team from our local church that had started a relationship with a church in Africa in 2009. We had

someone who was really big into missions in our church and was asked to go to Africa to check out what was going on. There was a minister that had contacted our pastor and told us that we needed to look into that. So he went on his own in 2009 and was amazed at what he saw. He came back and suggested that our church organize a mission trip there, which we did. About 20 people from our church went out in the summer of 2010. Since then, we've gone every year. I think there was only one year where I think we brought some folks from there over here. But we've developed a very close relationship with the people there that we're working with in Tanzania.

5:00

In particular, our work there is in partnership with a church in the Kilimanjaro region. The name of that church is PEFA (Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa). The pastor in that particular church is Elieta Mbise. Together our church and Elieta have both coordinated lots of ministry towards orphans and widows in the Kilimanjaro region. Beginning in 2013, we began work on a church plant in a Muslim village on the east coast of Tanzania in a region called Tonga—just outside of Tonga City. The name of the village is Maswaneshamba. That church has been completed. Right now, from the emails that we've been receiving, the church has been providing lots of ministry and care in that community for the past couple years now. It's beginning to grow. In addition to that, beginning in 2013, Elieta had told us that there was a hunger to know more—to learn more. He asked if there was any possibility that teachers could come to Tanzania and provide education or biblical teaching to pastors in both the Kilimanjaro region, and eventually in the Tonga region, as well. We started that in 2013. Initially, our pastor was supposed to head that up. Unfortunately, he was battling illness at that time and couldn't go and asked if I would take his place. That was in 2013.

We did the conference on the differences between Islam and Christianity. We had between 80 and 100 pastors in attendance in both locations. These pastors (just for a little background) come from very remote areas. The one thing I have learned about the people of Tanzania, particularly within the Church, is that their hunger to know more about the Bible is like nothing else I've ever seen. They will hitch a ride, spend the night wherever they can find a place to lay their head on very long travels to get to these conferences. It's a little daunting whenever you get out there to know that and hope and pray that you do a good job! [laughs]

The conferences in 2013 were very successful, and they called us back. In 2015, we did a conference in both locations over the Kingdom of God. It was driven mainly by Dallas Willard's Divine Conspiracy. In 2016, we revived the first conference on the distinctions between Christianity and Islam. Again, I think all three of them were relatively the same attendance—pretty successful, as far as the desire for materials. When you go out there, everybody wants to have your slides, they want to have references, whatever they can get their hands on. So this year... The need is always driven by the folks in Tanzania. We've been asked to go out there and really handle two requests. One is that when Beth went out and introduced the concept of the Deuteronomy 32 worldview or the Divine

Council worldview, their interest was piqued, to say the least. Now that the book has been translated in Swahili and is available to them to read, they want to know more about it. But they're also wanting a practical aspect. How do we take the Deuteronomy 32 worldview and apply it in our churches? In particular, one of the things that they specifically said is, "We want to know more about how to grow our churches deeper, rather than bigger." So I think that there's a lot of harmony between the Deuteronomy 32 worldview and the Kingdom worldview—the one we did in '15 with Willard's book. I think that right now what we're working on is putting together the slides and we're looking at going out in June to present it in two locations again—the Kilimanjaro region, and also in Tonga.

10:00

MH: Now, when Beth went out, were you along with Beth, or did she do that herself?

CC: Last year, Beth went out there and I didn't go. I've gone to Africa three times with her, but last year I did not go.

MH: I know from corresponding and chatting with her on the phone that there seemed to be... Maybe it's just Beth. [laughs] She can be pretty dramatic! But there seemed to be a pretty dramatic response to it. That actually led to (or was part of), "Hey, we heard about the translation project." I guess she had mentioned it or something. So someone emerged from that community or gathering (Donald) to do the translation. What are your impressions of what she has talked to you about since that initial orientation? Very specifically with divine council stuff, I guess our audience would probably be curious as to whether this was old or new. Could they sort of see with more clarity than lots of Christians over here typically have when you introduce them to the content? They just look at you like you've got two heads or something. Was there a difference there? Tell us a little bit about that.

CC: Sure. Before they left last summer, I asked her for a copy of her slides. So I got to see the content that she was going to be using, and I was really excited. I really wished I could have been there. But when they came back, the way Beth had described it was that the response was amazing. It sounded like it was a whole lot more than what I've ever seen over there. There's always been an insatiable hunger to learn for the subjects that we've talked about, but in this particular case, I don't think it was familiar to them. I think in that regard, they're a lot like us here. But it was like an "aha" moment for them in lots of ways. I could not explain that to you that well because of not being there. I'm just sort of reporting what I was told. But I know this: the books that were brought out there were in high demand.

MH: I can't remember how many I sent out, but I remember sending some out.

CC: Yeah, their appreciation for that (from what I was told) was amazing, and they wanted more. I think that's the context for this year's trip.

MH: I've presented divine council stuff before. I remember one particular place in San Diego (this was years ago, before I even had completed the *Myth That Is True* draft that would become, in part, *Unseen Realm*), and there were five or six pastors from Africa at this event. They were really excited about it afterwards. They were excited because it was like, "Finally we hear somebody over here saying what we more or less just experience all the time!" To them, it was more like a grateful response that somebody finally said something, as opposed to it being new. So I was curious. Because I've had the other side, as well—that this is sort of "Christian Stuff 101," as far as believing that the supernatural is real. You run into it. And they were like, "Yeah, we don't go a week without having to deal with something." So I was just curious what that was like.

CC: One of the things that whenever I go over there they really show me... They teach me a lot. I tell them that, and it sounds a little cliché, but they really do. Because whenever we go over there, there's always a time whenever someone falls sick... Someone will get malaria, or maybe they just... whatever the case may be. Over here, we're just so accustomed to being able to just go to the doctor or get ahold of some medication. Over there, they rely so heavily on prayer. It's an immediate response for them. So for them to see God intervene and answer prayers is not something that's like... Over here, we see that too, but over there it's sort of like taking ibuprofen for us to them. The Holy Spirit heals them from whatever they were suffering with. It's a little more... They're a lot more open in anticipation of what God is going to do, whereas I think here we're so reliant on technology and medicine and everything else that it's a whole lot different for us.

15:00

MH: Mmhmm. Now, what's the language situation over there? How many speak English? Does everybody speak English—80%, 20%... what's the deal there?

CC: I would say it was over 50% speak some English. Whenever I'm at a conference in the past, there would be some that would know a little bit of English that would struggle, but you'd be surprised at how many do know English, and know it very well.

MH: I guess we could task you with something. If you're going to go over in June, they've got the Swahili translation now. Make sure that they understand that they can do whatever they want with that. They can print it. If they have digital devices or they take it into the city... whatever. It's free, and they can do whatever they want with it—reproduce it as often as possible. I'd like you to ask them what other kinds of things, specifically, they need, in terms of content or anything. We're going to be doing some discipleship stuff this year—written content and putting that out to translators. So I don't want to reinvent the wheel if they already have things like that from some other ministry in the past, in their case. But it would be nice to know what a group like that really needs—both to use themselves and then to disseminate and multiply and so on.

CC: I know that you mentioned discipleship. That's a big thing. They would definitely like whatever is available for that topic.

MH: Try to narrow it topically. I don't want to be silly here, but when we think of discipleship... This is my own context, growing up as a Christian. "Discipleship" meant getting material on "you should read your Bible, you should pray, you should come to church, you should tithe, and you should get baptized." That was discipleship. After that, it's "show up and listen to the preaching." Of course, if the preaching is good, that's really helpful. But it would be nice to know if there's some specific issue or something that's really kind of a sweet spot over there that they just run into all the time or really struggle with. So if you can do a little fishing, that would be great.

CC: Sure, sure. I do know... It's similar over here, but discipleship in terms of... What they've witnessed a lot of is that there's such a focus on the emotional part of it—the experiential part of it. But they recognize (just like we're beginning to recognize over here) that there needs to be more than that. "I know I have to be a disciple of Jesus, but what exactly does mean or look like?" I think that's where they're at.

MH: It might be as simple as that. Beyond this emotional stuff or this feeling I get... I don't want to be too pejorative, but I have American Christians in mind behind "the warm-fuzzy feeling that I get when I listen to the worship band and I'm here every week." Like, "what am I supposed to do" and "what is this supposed to be?" [laughing]

CC: "I'm covering everything on the list here and I don't get it. What's the deal?"

MH: Okay, so it seems to be pretty basic and pretty broad, then. But if you run into anything specific, let us know. But I have one more question: When Beth brought... You said she exposed them to the podcast. I imagine she had a device with mp3's on it or something? So it wasn't something they could tune into, or was it? I know we wanted to have Donald on with us and the government over there just shuts the electricity off randomly and it's very unpredictable, so that didn't work out. But beyond the electricity problem and the unpredictability of that, what is the technological situation like? Do people have phones? Do they have like a Walkman from the 80's or something? What's going on over there?

20:00

CC: Most of their internet is wireless from a cellular provider, and it's spotty, as you can imagine. In town it's pretty good, but the speeds are not like the speeds we get here. Everybody pretty much carries a... Remember those old Nokia phones? There are a lot of those. But according to folks that went last year, the smart phones are making their way in that area. There's no wire line anything, when it comes to broadband, so they rely on wireless more than anything else.

MH: I'm just wondering if we put episodes on a flash drive and you took it over there and they could copy them from desktop to desktop. Is that worth doing?

CC: I definitely think so.

MH: Well, we'll just plan on getting that to you and you can reproduce it however you're able to do that. I'm glad you could give us a little report about the fact that *Supernatural*, especially (the book), but more generally the divine council stuff is penetrating that part of Africa. We have listeners all over the world. Trey and I both get emails from people who catch the podcast in the oddest places and circumstances. Since we had a translation project going with someone you have immediate contact with and, of course, knowing that you do this, we wanted to have you on so you could share a little bit with the podcast audience. We want them to know this kind of stuff is happening, and it's not an isolated thing. We've got over 20 translation projects (half of them are done now), and this sort of thing is happening everywhere. We also talked to some people in the Middle East (we can't really be more specific than that) and we have another interview set up for Eastern Europe. But this sort of things is happening all over the place. We just wanted to include Africa. So thanks for spending a little bit of time with us!

CC: My pleasure. I appreciate it!

22:20

MH: Well, we're fortunate to have Donald Mmari (correct me if I'm saying your last name incorrectly) with us. He is online with us from Africa! Why don't you introduce yourself a little bit—where you're at and what you do.

DM: My name is Donald Mmari. I am from Sanya Juu in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania. I am a secondary school teacher. Currently, I am doing my Master's degree in education at Tumainai University Makumira in Arusha, Tanzania.

MH: Wow! What do you teach?

DM: I teach English.

MH: Okay. Well, then, you were the perfect person to translate *Supernatural*. Donald is our Swahili translator for my book, *Supernatural*.

DM: Yeah.

MH: So thank you for doing that! [laughs] That was a lot of work! Thank you for that.

DM: Thank you, also, for giving this important text.

MH: Well, we'd just like to chat a little bit about the impact that Charlie and others have had in ministry out there, and you yourself. We would like to know how the kind of teaching in the book has been received. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

25:00

DM: Yeah, I can say a little bit. The books... I know that I have worked on one of the books that is *Supernatural*, but we have been with quite some time since 2011 she has been teaching on various places in Kilimanjaro and some places in Arusha and Tonga through conferences. She has been using your books as references of teachings. They have been very helpful. I think now it is going to be much more easy because we have it now in Swahili. Last time we had to take some phrases from the book and then put it into the materials. But if we have the book now in Swahili, it is easier for the pastors now to get the copy and use that.

MH: How do you imagine you will be able to distribute the translation? Is it going to be print or digital? How do you imagine that can be done, and what can we do to help?

DM: I think both ways can be used. Most of the people here are using smart phones so they can access the material online, if it is free, especially. For the printed ones, they can also be useful. Maybe when we hold the conference we can have some copies and give to the people who are attending so that they have something to rely on.

MH: I was going to ask if it would help if we printed some here, and I know Charlie is going back there in June, but I don't know if we could accomplish that by June. But do you have a printer there? And even if you do, is that something we should think about doing?

DM: I think it will be helpful, though I cannot say to what extent. But the way I worked on that book, I found that it has so many important things which people need to get for them. So I think it would help. Some copies would be very helpful. Not so many copies, but even about a hundred or two hundred, they can help.

MH: Is there a printer near you? Because we could also help pay for that. Do you have a printer in a nearby town or city? How does that work?

DM: Yeah, the printers are there, but I don't know exactly how much it costs for printing a copy. Maybe I go there and see how it works.

MH: Let us know how much that would cost. Just ask him how much would it cost for a hundred or five hundred, and then let me know. We can discuss that by email whenever you know.

DM: I will.

MH: Do you have a specific role in a church there, or teaching the Bible outside of teaching English? Or do you sort of do a little of all of that?

DM: I am just a church member. I don't have a specific role, but I just translate for the people who are coming from different places who are not familiar with Swahili. That is the main thing I do. Teaching is my job, so I'm just doing it for getting income.

MH: How many students do you have?

DM: It's a public school, so it depends. Sometimes around... One class has around 50-80 to students.

MH: What age?

DM: The age of 15 to 19.

MH: Okay. Do you have a required curriculum?

DM: Yeah. The curriculum we have there.

MH: I was going to say that if you didn't have a lot of rules, maybe you could sneak *Supernatural* in as a text book! [laughing] We would send them free to you.

DM: Mmmm... We can use them when we are having... In public school, we have one day for religious studies, so in that particular period we can, yes, use them.

MH: That's interesting.

DM: Yeah.

MH: Okay, well, I'll remember that. Wow. So one more question. When you have Charlie or someone else come to teach, is that connected to just one particular church, or do you get people from everywhere that come to that? And how do people find out?

DM: At the beginning, we had people from almost all the churches, but right now the teachings are focusing on pastors from one church.

MH: Okay... okay. So they're specifically trying to help pastors learn more, and then they can teach other people. All right.

DM: Yes.

30:00

MH: Well, we're glad that we could play a little part in this. We talked to Charlie for this episode of the podcast, and I told him that we are going to be sending audio files of the podcast to him on thumb drives (flash drives). So you can expect him to have some of those when he gets there again.

DM: Okay.

MH: Is there anything that would be useful if we can help you get those things or make those things? We are interested in doing that. Our talk here will be on that podcast soon. It will be Episode 200, so you can listen to yourself! [laughter]

DM: Thank you!

MH: Well, thanks for sharing a few minutes with us. Like I said, if you need something, you have to let us know and we can do what we can to help you.

DM: Thank you, too, and I'm very delighted to hear from you.

MH: Thank you for all your work in the *Supernatural* translation. We really appreciate it.

DM: Thank you. I appreciate, too, for giving me that chance to work on it.

MH: Good. We don't want to keep you too late.

DM: Thank you. And thank you, Trey.

MH: Thank you!

DM: Okay, well good night. Thank you, thank you!

MH: Bye, bye.

DM: Bye, bye.

32:10

MH: I'm sure there's probably things you can't say about yourself, but is there anything you can say?

MB: Yeah, my name is Michael Burke. I grew up in a small town in Missouri. I'm half Filipino and half Irish-American. Because of the half Filipino side, I don't age as fast as my predecessors, which is a good thing now. But as I was growing up, I was always the shortest and the smallest of my peers, which made me a very easy target for bullies. So I found myself very early on having to dodge bullies

and think quick on my feet to avoid confrontation. But thanks be to God that it was just a phase and I grew out of it.

Through high school and college, I developed martial arts skills. I learned how to see threats before they developed into a confrontation. What I learned was through strength and discipline in what God was showing me in the Bible, that you can actually apply it to your life to create a posture of dominance—not in a way where you put people under, but where you don't present yourself vulnerable to being attacked or taken advantage of. It's a posture of what God has done for you, and then you reflect that and create safety in the presence of the Living God, where evil doesn't see you as an easy target anymore (where basically, evil sees you as a threat). I don't think it's biblical for us as Christians to be afraid of the threats that exist. I don't think that we should be running and hiding from the darkness. I do think it is biblical that the darkness be running from us.

So that's pretty much what I've been doing the last 10-12 years—taking my experience in Force Recon with the U.S. Marine Corp and then volunteering with anti-human trafficking ministries, basically missionary groups that are in hostile areas and giving them the tools and the words that God has given me of basically embodying the gospel, which isn't just words, but is power. Through the cross, we actually can become more than conquerors. Evil develops and manifests itself in multiple different ways, whether that's through bullies, or poverty, or disease, pestilence, lack of resources. Evil can come against us in multiple ways, but through the power of the gospel we can actually stand up against it and push it back, and actually bring heaven to earth and create a little pocket of the presence of God here on earth through the words that we preach. We put what we preach into practice, and you can see the fruit of it everywhere you go. So that's pretty much the scene of my life thus far. Now I'm working in the Middle East and, yeah, I'm not going to get into the details for security reasons.

35:00

MH: Yeah, we'll come back to the specifics of that as you're able to give them. We also have with us Bell. What can you say about yourself? [laughs]

Bell: I can say about myself that I grew up in single-parent home with a mom who taught volunteerism and to give your life away. Even though we didn't have, we learned to give. So that's the nature of my heart—to give. I found Christ at a really very early age because my mom had surgery and they didn't think she was going to come out of the hospital. So I found Christ then, because when you don't want your mom to pass away, that's where I found Christ. Because of that, I have a very compassionate heart. God gave me a dream some time ago when I was growing up, that my gift is loving people and being very compassionate. That has entailed really giving. My ministry that I do is I've found that giving to people and encouraging people... There is a little lady, her name was Sister Mary Spencer, who mentored me for seven years before she passed away. And she had the prison ministry. The name of her ministry was The Holy Women of God. She

taught me how to live a life of holiness. Billy Graham said a great thing: "Once you become a Christian, people are going to look at you, and they're going to look to see if you walk the walk and talk the talk." So here people know. I think what is really very interesting is that even if they're from another culture, they can feel the love of God in your heart. And that's what I'm doing—walking and doing the love of God, which changes people's hearts. Because when they see love and they feel love, they feel love that you're giving them, it changes the whole dynamics of that. I've found that has been a great change of compassion and love for people and the people of God, no matter what color or religion they are. Because that shows them the true love of God. And that's where I'm at.

MH: We were connected to you (or made aware of you) by a mutual friend. His name is John. My question is, do the two of you (Michael and Bell)... Are you together geographically? Are you... What are the circumstances there? Because what we want to talk about (and I know we're a bit constrained for time because Michael might have something thrown on his desk here shortly)... Are you together geographically or separate? Why would John mention both of you together? And then we want to talk about how the content of *Supernatural* has had an impact, or how you're using that where you're at in what you're doing.

Bell: Oh, great, great, great... You want to take that, Mike? We're just... It's kinda hard to explain that one. We are...

MB: I can explain what I do. Basically, I am here providing security for the U.S. State Department at the U.S. Embassy, and I have become the volunteer pastor for the Christian chapel service here.

MH: Somewhere in the Middle East, right.

MB: Right. We've had a military chaplain, prior. But when the military separated, it kind of fell into my lap to continue the church service here. So it's predominantly, mainly, for American citizens and the U.S. mission. It's basically a small city. So it's a ministry in itself, but the Lord is definitely using us. We've developed multiple small groups throughout this little city of ours. I can see that *Supernatural* would be a great tool to develop the minds of our disciples here.

MH: Now, are you able to... John had asked me for several of the translations. Have you used them, or do you have plans for that, or what?

Bell: Yes, actually, I was praying about it. I really love the book. I enjoyed the book, and so I'm turning it into a syllabus. We've been using it for teaching, but the problem is breaking it down and making it teachable in the small groups. And so yes, that's what I'm doing right now. I'm making it into a palatable syllabus, where they can use it as teaching tools during the teaching times. I cannot just tell you how the explosion of the little small satellite groups (as Mike is telling you)... It's just... Not only that, but sending them... Once we're starting to teach

40:00

them on what the book is, what I want to do is just send the syllabus, because everybody can't take the book and take everything with them. What I want them to be able to do is tell them to just take a copy where they're going and then take it to where they live—in the country where they live. So they can go on and teach that. So it actually is going to become a teaching tool, where it's actually going with individuals who have learned it, and they're going to take it and go with it. So that's the really great thing about it. It's actually little groups that are going and then they're taking it back to their homes. And when they're learning it and understanding it, they're taking it back. It's really, actually, a great teaching tool. And I really like your other book called *The Unfiltered Bible*. That's really good, too. Love that one, too. Great book. I'm working on a syllabus for that, too, but it's just one at a time. I've got a lot of things on my plate that I'm kind of doing right now, because I'm doing it when I'm not working.

MH: Make sure that people know with *Supernatural* (whether they get it in English or some other form), that is completely free for distribution, and they can have it translated into other languages if they want. We don't have a Farsi yet, so over in the Middle East, that's one of the languages that we're hoping to get at some point. Arabic, obviously, we have now. French was finished this week. I know that a lot of these Middle Eastern countries have French as an important language. So that one just dropped this week. So it'll be up in the folder. I don't know if John gave you folder access or how he gave it to you, but it's there.

Bell: He just sent it through an email. But I'm telling you, that is powerful. So what I'm doing is taking the syllabus and translating it into the language. So when this is taught, it's taught with the syllabus. So I'm going to send you a copy when I'm done, because I'm still getting someone to look at it. It's actually coming... Because your book is so great, I'm taking the chapters and making them into the syllabus, and I'm just saying... It's actually almost like a little journal-book form, because I want them to be able to understand it, chew it, and get it, and then take it. It's a great, great book. It's a really good book. I want to do that to the unabridged one, also—*The Unfiltered Bible*. The other book, too.

MH: The most recent one, yeah. Now Michael or Bell, just give us an idea of what the response has been—either push-back or something that people have really had a bit of a fire lit under them, or something has become clear. Just something where you've seen it become meaningful to somebody.

Bell: I can give an example. We were reading through the books and what happens is that I think a lot of times when they're teaching about the supernatural, a lot of people really don't know. Like, a lot of people that are coming from Hindi and other cultures like that, when they're getting in the gospel, it really kind of unveils it for them. It unveils it, and they know that there are other forces, but they're not taught about... It helps them to understand the plain English and plain understanding of what the supernatural is. And it's a real eye-opener. One of the guys... We were talking about it, and he said, "Really?" That's

my version of it. You know, his eyes kind of got big and he really got ahold of it. That's what it does. The interest of the Word of God brings light. You can see the change in their understanding, and it's so great. So that's why I love it. I love it. I love what it's doing to people and the change that they're getting from it. They're getting a true change. You may not be able to talk to everybody, but they are really loving it. So yes, it's really changing...

MH: We're glad to hear that. Michael, now that it's sort of divorced from the military and you're subsuming this role of being the chaplain, how much oversight is there over you, and how much of the content that you give do you have control over?

45:00 **MB:** I have 100% control of the church ministry here.

MH: Wow, that's nice.

MB: Yeah, I had two gentlemen working on our co-ed Bible study. We have a women's study on Tuesday nights, a co-ed study on Thursday nights, and a men's study on Friday nights. I have yet to receive the materials to distribute. We just finished a study last week, and so we are looking for more materials to put out to...

MH: Are you looking for hard copy or digital?

MB: Hard copy.

MH: Another question: Do you guys listen to the podcast at all? Are you able to do that?

Bell: Yes.

MH: I'm just wondering if there are any firewalls or obstacles or what the situation is over there.

Bell: The only thing I can tell you is that the church that I'm speaking of is a church mainly made up of ex-pats (people who are foreign nationals)—Arabic, Kenyan, Indian, and Peruvian. It's really multi-cultural. But it's really catching fire. There are a lot of satellite groups. It's just amazing what the power of God is doing here. It is just absolutely amazing. And the materials that John has been sending are just incredible. So we're just waiting on some more things to come by. Mike, I'll give you a copy of the syllabus as soon as I finish, but I'll also send you guys a copy. I think you'll really enjoy it. Then you can use it as a teaching tool, also. What I want to do is I'm trying to get some other stuff to other people to translate (tracts and things) in Arabic. We have great groups of people that are on fire for God. They are hungry for it. They are very hungry for it.

MH: We should mention John's ministry in this. So just say a little bit about what your connection is to his ministry—the Soldier's Bible ministry.

Bell: For me, he blessed us. There was such a need in our chapel, in our church that we have. It's called All Nations Church. They were without Bibles, and the chaplain there got in touch with John and he sent us Bibles. They were so grateful to receive Bibles because they were without Bibles. So that's how the connection was—through the chaplain. He has sent us quite a bit of material that we're using, like devotionals and things like that. It's really helped the growth of the congregation, which is quite a few people because a lot of the workers and a lot of the people that come in the evening time—that's why the congregation is really pretty big. It's a pretty good size. And it's packed. Those satellite groups are going home and taking their information home and taking the fire that they have home where they are.

MH: Michael, how about you? What's your connection to John?

MB: I was introduced to John by Bell. It's the same thing. We usually get Bibles donated from different churches here at the embassy, so people would take Bibles, and we encourage them to take them back to their... Most people are seasonal here. They come here, they do their short-term mission, and they go home. So we're always getting Bibles, giving them out, getting Bibles, and giving them out. Brother John is quite the blessing to be able to bring so many Bibles in different translations. That's something we'd definitely been missing. It's awesome.

Bell: Yay! Yeah, he's our hero!

MH: I'm sure he'll hear that. I'm sure he'll listen. Kudos to you, John. [laughing] I know he's not... John's a good guy. This is really a big concern to him, which, of course, is why he started the ministry. His heart's in it. He'll enjoy hearing that. Well, I want to thank you guys for contributing a little bit to what is going to become our 200th episode on the podcast. We're just talking to people in different parts of the world. Some can be more open than others, as far as who they are and their information geographically and what they're doing, but you guys will be part of that. We just figure that would be a good thing to do for that benchmark episode. We get emails a lot that people are using the content, and especially as the translations are starting to drop now. I'm just glad that it's useful. That's really why we do it—to try to do something useful for believers.

50:00

MB and Bell: Amen!

Bell: I want to let you know it's more than useful. It's very educational. We're trying to get a lot of the people that are actually benefitting from it... What I'd like to be able to do is after they've finished their training, we'd like to do a graduation. That's why I'm just thinking that once they go through the training, do

a graduation and have them come and speak to you so that you can come and hear for yourself what it's done—so you can actually hear the results. So that's what...

MH: The other thing is if you guys need anything, you can email me or reach out to John and he'll send it to me. In 2018, we're going to be... We're trying to put some thought into it now—a little bit of planning thought—to produce something useful for discipleship that incorporates the content. Your syllabus sounds like you're already down that road. The idea is to produce something brief, but that uses the content in discipleship. Then once that's produced in English, pass it around to some people in different cultural/people groups and have them work it over or adapt it to their own situation. Then, ultimately, get that stuff translated. Because now that I know all these translators, they're just ducks in the pond, really. They're right there, they're good at what they do, they're competent. This would be a lot shorter than *Supernatural*, so we could produce a number of things through my non-profit that would be useful. So if you have ideas of things that you'd like to see, please pass them on. Or if you're angling for something or you need something, you've got to let us know.

Bell: You know, I think it just... What I really was praying about is that both of them are such great books, that they would have like a journal attached to it. Does that make sense what I'm saying? I'm doing the syllabus...

MH: Send me a sample couple pages of what you're thinking so I can visualize it.

Bell: Okay. Because it's a great book, but people need to mediate on it after they read it. Just one chapter—they need to meditate onto and just really get into it. That's what I'm wanting them to do. So when they get finished with the book, it's actually a class. The book is a class. The book itself is a teaching class, and when they get finished with it, it will take them to another level. That's what I'm wanting to do.

MH: Michael, do have anything to add? I know you're a little bit pressed for time.

MB: I just think it's amazing that you are able to give the Word of God out to so many people. I think it's awesome that the Lord has given you such a vision for this to proclaim the Word of God in such a way. I do think that when we focus on the negativity, there's always something wrong with the world. When we focus on that, we lose sight of what God is doing, and we actually throw off our royalty. We break fellowship with God when we focus too much on the wars and the violence and the pain and the suffering. Not that those things don't exist—they do exist. But the provision of God exists in the problem. Where we plant our seeds of faith, it's always in somebody else's problem. So I think it's amazing that you are getting out the testimony of what God's doing in this region. Most of the time, people just hear the negativity and the heartache and the tragedy, but there are

real miracles going on, and the Bible says that he inhabits the praise of His people. So that's what's going on here. There is a community praising the name of God and it's growing day by day.

Bell: Yes... yes!

MH: We tend to gravitate toward that. You have probably heard me before say something to that effect—that I enjoy finding believers in all sorts of odd places just doing stuff that needs to be done. They don't stop and ask for permission, they don't look at the problems. I just like to see that! I love to run into it, where there's so much that could be done that gets stymied, either by the stuff Michael's referring to or just mind-numbing bureaucracy. Just get off your butt and do it! [laughs]

Bell: Yes, Amen, Amen, Amen!

55:00

MH: I just enjoy seeing it. We tend to gravitate toward that kind of things here. Maybe there's a bit of a mischievous streak involved in it, too. It's just fun to see people do things that need to be done, and God will be in it. He'll bless it.

Bell: I agree, I completely agree. You know, if you would have told me how it would all be taking off... All of it is just taking off. We were just talking about how fast it's taking off and how fast and powerful... And I mean, it's just moving and going beyond... It's just mind-boggling—the supernatural things. If you can only know the supernatural things that God is doing here—incredibly so. Just from here! So yes.

MH: That's what we like to hear! [laughs]

Bell: Oooh, yeah! And I'm happy about it. You know what, you don't ask, you just get it done. So Amen.

MB: Amen.

MH: Well, thank you both. Be safe. I know your hearts are in what you're doing. The Lord be with you and the people that you minister to, as well.

Bell: Amen.

MB: Well, thanks for having us!

Bell: Thank you for having us, and thank you for the books, and thank you for the material that we're using. You know what? John is my hero, and you're my hero, too, because this is what it is. It's empowering a lot of people, it really is. No kidding, no kidding. It really is. Thank you.

MH: Well, that's great. You're welcome.

Bell: Thank you. God bless you!

56:35

MH: Well, we have three people with us from Albania. When I ask them to introduce themselves they can get more specific than that, as far as city and ministry and that sort of thing. We have David, Bruna, and Fitor. Why don't you introduce yourselves to the podcast audience? Again, we're thrilled that you would be able to do this. I know we've got a big time zone variance here, but we really wanted you to be part of our 200th episode because of how much you're enjoying the content and what you're doing with it. So please go ahead and introduce yourselves. I guess we could start with David, and then the other two please introduce yourselves.

DM: Sure! Well, it's great to talk to you, Mike and Trey. I'm David Muniz. I'm American. I work here in Albania. And I'm a big follower of the Naked Bible and your work. In fact, I shared a copy of the *Unseen Realm* with Fitor and Bruna, and that's how all of this got started here in Albania.

MH: Oh, wow!

DM: It's quite remarkable.

Bruna: My name is Bruna, and I work in Tirana. I am a colleague of David's, and this is how I had an opportunity after he shared with me a copy of the book, and then I shared it with the pastor—Pastor Fitor.

FM: Yeah, she shared with me, but because she is my daughter. [laughter] And when she told me about this book, I was really... I wanted to know more about this book and I said to her, "Please can you find a copy?" So through David, we had the opportunity to have a copy of the book. I was completely caught at the moment that I opened the book and I was reading about Psalm 82:1. I was completely caught and shocked from this, because it is like a person that had been blind and in a moment he can see. And I thought, "I have to start." So we started as a family every day—every morning—we will read the book together. So we continued for a time, and then we talk as a family, and then I thought it's time to raise up a team—a group of people from the church starting this book. So this was the beginning.

MH: Wow. I understand what you're saying with Psalm 82! [laughter] That's how I start the book!

FM: But you know what? Sometimes it looks like people... [switches to Albanian]

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Bruna [Translating for Fitor]: It's like those gold-searchers that are able to find gold in the river. And that it's the evidence that they are able to find more gold if they continue with that stream of river. And the same happened with me. At the time I was caught by this book—by the beginning of this book. I was fully convinced that I had to continue. And as I said, we were able to put together a team of approximately 20 people from the church. A part of this group is part of the leadership team in the church. The rest of the group are individuals who have a thirst and they really wanted to go deep in the Word of God. So, therefore, we embarked on this journey. And I can say that it's a journey that has brought us into depth that we had never envisioned we would go. But now it seems like it's impossible to get away or to get dis-attached from what we've been studying. And we continuously debate—we have continuous debates—within the group. It is a healthy and pleasant debate, it's not exhausting. And I can really say that it was a blessing.

MH: Boy, what can I say? It's a little overwhelming. I'm very grateful that it has been such a blessing. But honestly, I'm more grateful that you made so much effort to teach other people and have them read the book, because that's why we do it. Obviously, I know just what you're talking about. Once you see it, you can't un-see it. There it is. That's what happened to me, so I'm always thrilled to hear that happening elsewhere and to other people.

DM: Mike, I think it's quite remarkable because I know on your podcast you talk all the time about there's only a few people in every church, usually, that are really looking to go deeper and how hard it is to get a group of people together where all of them see this or are interested. "Middle Earth residents," as you would call them. I can tell you, if we were back home, I don't think I would have shared this with a pastor and had 20 people reading the book a year later with plans for even more, with sermons being themed on this content and to bring this out... It's really quite remarkable. I attribute it to the fact that here in Albania, people don't have a denominational overlay. They don't have all this tradition, which can sometimes get in the way (as you know) of just seeing this for what it is. Because we all have these traditions about what the Bible is—faith, theological traditions, you know. It's really refreshing to see believers who look at the Bible, they see what it says, and they just accept it!

MH: What's the harm? Let's just look at the text. [laughs] What's the harm?

DM: Exactly, exactly.

MH: Wow. That's really neat. I'm curious, David or Bruna, have you tried... It sounds like you're just going with the heavy dose—*Unseen Realm*. I'm wondering about if you've read *Supernatural* or tried to use any of that. I have to wonder also about what languages are needed. I'm sure you all know about the

translation project. I'm wondering if we have anything either running or completed that would serve somebody who doesn't have English there.

1:05:00

DM: As you know, we've been discussing translating *Supernatural* for the rest of the congregation. I think it's a good move. I've only read *The Unseen Realm*. I've never read *Supernatural*. I need the footnotes. I need to kind of read through this and see. Maybe not every time, but you need to see it for yourself. Albania... I'll let Fitor and Bruna talk more about the Albanian language and the peculiarities of it. It's a language with very, very old roots. And it's also very, very different from any of the languages of the neighboring countries. But a lot of people here, in addition to speaking Albanian, they also speak Italian, maybe French, maybe German—so those bigger European languages. There's a lot of people here who speak them and speak them well. And English is very widely spoken here by people who are educated. Just about everyone, especially younger people, are learning English. English is actually much more useful here than even, say some of the neighboring countries like Serbia or Greece. You can penetrate pretty far with that. Albanians tend to know that their language is really difficult and obscure. They readily learn other languages—much more so than other people that I've... I don't know. I really think Fitor and Bruna should also speak to that.

Bruna: I would like to also pinpoint the fact that when it comes to the book, *The Unseen Realm*, it's not so easy to be understood by Albanians, regardless of level of English. Therefore, what we've been doing as a group is inviting chapters and translating them so that the entire team could work off the same version, and then we're able to go back and discuss that and turn that chapter into a discussion point—a focus of discussion.

FM [translated by Bruna]: So what usually happens is that on Mondays, the member of the team that will be doing the translation will be translating the chapter that is provided to the team the week after. And then throughout the following week, the entire team prepares, reads and makes notes and comments, and then we discuss that over the next... So this is how we've been going through in this process. But I am very grateful to Dr. Heiser for the opportunity you have granted to us through this book. We had never, for example, anticipated or thought that we would go through the analysis of divine hierarchy, or even actually connect that with Ephesians. Because really it seemed like the unseen realm was really unseen until this window was opened unto us. So we are very grateful for this opportunity you have given to us to do this work. Because it's not rare that in churches you find questions related to this. Such as, for example, the book of Job. For example, when we were unable to answer the question, "How did Satan make it into God's presence?" But only through this book we were able to respond to it.

MH: Wow. That's just so neat! [laughs] It's just really... All the effort you've put into it. And it's really a good approach to break it down like you're doing and translate portions. Yeah. I haven't run into any other church that's doing that.

There are churches using *Supernatural*. I wish they would do it with *Unseen Realm*. I think there are a handful that are trying to do something there, but you folks are just way ahead. It's really admirable, to be honest with you. I love hearing about it.

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FM [translated by Bruna]: For example, what has really been something that has really touched and impacted these when we talk about cosmic geography. For example, when it speaks about Naaman, we'd never understood why did he, for example, ask for some land from Israel, to bring it over? And the way cosmic geography introduced and presented it to us makes it very clear each presentation to the church and it really provides space for the church. It's not typical for the church to understand when we talk about cosmic geography.

MH: Good example.

FM [translated by Bruna]: And also another thing that we've learned from this book would be the idea to go deep—to rummage in the Word of God. And then to continue to ask questions about difficult passages we find in the scriptures. Whereas from before we would actually skip them. I'm really grateful to God because it really broadens our understanding of him, and also this cooperation between his creatures. This will then lead into worship that is meaningful.

MH: Yeah. I hate to put it this way, but that's a missing element in a lot of places. You're really seeing the things I was hoping readers would see and connecting those dots.

DM: You know, Mike, I wanted just to say, too, that one of the interesting phenomena that occurred with the study group in the church was at the moment the book was available, there were a large number of people in the church leadership (among the intellectuals in the church) who had questions about many different difficult parts of scripture, like Genesis 6, like Babel, and all the parts you cover in the book—the kinds of things that are frequently discussed in Christian Middle Earth. These folks were ready and looking for answers and afraid to ask. So the timing of all this... It's obviously a divine appointment on multiple levels. But the book was able to suddenly bring all these folks together and start answering these questions in a way that none of them would have expected. So it's been a real blessing on that front, too. To me, there's a lot more people who could benefit from this, but I think we know that.

MH: Yeah. Did they come across and have these questions by their own reading—their own study—or do they have exposure to other things (radio, TV, whatever) or other ministries that would have planted the questions?

FM [translated by Bruna]: No, it's simply from the study of this book, actually. If you, for example, were to be present in our study group, there's really great joy in the dynamic of our discussion. It looks like when you actually are part of such a

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study group, people should be very sober and not happy, but... [laughter] They sometimes come with questions that go even beyond the unseen part of the unseen you've brought to us. I have to really bring them down. I tell them, "Please, you have to be careful when it comes to how far can you go." We've had some questions, and we did actually write them down. We have some of them. And just before this conversation that we're holding together, I asked them if they could share with us some of the values of the group and some of the questions that they have seen. And some of the things that I've been sharing are the values that the group has noticed in this book. We are currently, as we speak, starting chapter 25. If I said we're starting a chapter after chapter and it hasn't been that we spent only one week per chapter through our weeks, there are times that we have spent more than a week—maybe two weeks per chapter, for we really want to digest what we have been studying.

MH: I'd love to hear your impressions and some questions. But you're amazingly tenacious [laughs]. I'm trying to think of another word, maybe something easier to translate, but you're *dedicated*. Dedicated.

FM [translated by Bruna]: I don't know if it's appropriate to ask any questions because I know that the group will ask me next Monday when we meet if I asked any questions on our behalf.

MH: Go ahead. If pastor has a couple of those questions, sure, why not?

Bruna: One of the questions is why God treated differently the two divine rebellions—the one in Genesis 3 and the other in Genesis 6? The *nachash* was sentenced to live in the underworld, while the proud *bene elohim* were bound in chains in darkness. The former gets some autonomy of activity, and the latter are in prison awaiting judgments. Another question would be, why did God insist so much on a no-trespassing policy between physical and spiritual realms when in the new Edenic earth, people and divine beings will live together?

MH: I think the second one... I think we have a little more information about that because God wasn't forbidding co-existence. He is forbidding other spiritual powers from having their own followings—raising up their own peoples, which would create rivalries. According to Psalm 82, it creates a circumstance where some of those beings are being looked upon as objects of worship and really doing things to solicit that kind of response from people. So I don't think that co-existence in and of itself was the problem. It went considerably beyond that. And... I don't know if any of the group has read or caught any of the podcast episodes where we talk about the content of *Reversing Hermon* (the other book), but there's also an element of divine beings presuming to dispense certain knowledge to humans that results in their own self-destruction and idolatry. So that was also an element of what's going on here, as well. So that's the second part.

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The first part... We're not really told specifically why God more or less takes the position that he does. I would say this, though: The initial rebellion really is obviously about the loss of mortality and the whole episode, while it's something that God certainly didn't ordain or want, he can—and will—rectify that situation through redemption. They will have eternal life, regardless. The *nachash* (the serpent) commits this particular crime to rob humans through deception of immortality and life with God. God, of course, comes right back and says, "Well, we're going to take care of that problem. We're going to raise up a deliverer—an answer—from the seed of the woman. We're still going to use humans. We're not wiping them off the planet. There is no Plan B. We're going to have humans involved, and from humans I will make a solution." And God, of course, anticipated that. This was no surprise—offering himself through the Son as a solution to that.

The other incident is a little bit different in that what they do essentially causes (if I can put it this way)... There are no hard problems for God, but it causes more difficulty because you have a situation where humans are essentially enabled and taught to destroy themselves more effectively. And so it's really an attack, not on human destiny or human membership in the family, but it's really an assault on humanity itself to try to really destroy people from the earth. The other one was thinking that, "We're going to get Adam and Eve to fall here, and then God is just going to wipe them out and that'll be the end of that." That isn't what happens. Their lives are preserved. But in the second instance, you've sort of got a multiplication of the problem: "Now we take these fallen humans and we teach them things that are going to direct their attention away from the plan of redemption—away from the true God. We're going to dispense knowledge that will produce idolatry and, of course, self-destructive behavior."

I think what they do in the second rebellion is actually more severe than the first, and I think that's part of why God responds in the way he does to sort of cut that off and stop it in its tracks a little bit. But I think the more severe punishment is actually merited. I say it that way because in the Second Temple period, this event... It's not the first event, it's not the Fall. That, of course, is well known and what happens there is well-known. We're estranged from God and now we're not going to have eternal life with him unless we are redeemed. But it's the second event that is viewed as more destructive and more of a problem because it results in the proliferation of human depravity. In Second Temple Judaism, it's actually the second event that is viewed as more of a catastrophe—more catastrophic consequences than even the first. It would be different if Adam and Eve get driven from the garden and then they realize what they've done and God offers them redemption and they have children and then they're able to teach their children about the true God and they have eternal life through the grace of God and whatnot. If that was the circumstance, that isn't as bad as a world full of people that not only are they in that situation, but they are essentially taught to turn from God—to hate God, to prefer some other entity and to explore the forbidden knowledge and practice idolatry and destroy the family unit through

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immorality and things like that. That's actually a much more severe problem because now you don't have just sort of one problem to solve (believe in the redemption that God offers, and you're going to die in this life but you'll still have eternal life). If you only had that problem, that would be a whole lot better than having to navigate all of the things that tear us away from hearing the message and direct our attention toward false gods. So I think that's why the problem was viewed more severely, and I think that would be a way to parse the difference in the punishment. We don't have a verse or a passage that spells all that out, but I think it's discernable.

DM: Right.

FM: Thank you.

FM [Translated by Bruna]: Besides this book that we're studying, do you, Dr. Heiser, have any methods that you would maybe suggest that we continue with our study, besides what we're doing?

MH: When you say "methods," do you mean tools to use or strategies?

Bruna: Both tools and strategies.

MH: It depends on what you have access to. I would recommend just generally, if everybody has internet access and a computer or a laptop or even a phone or a tablet or something like that, you could Google "faith life study bible." The Faithlife Study Bible is a translation that my employer created. I contributed to it, but it's not my translation. But it's a translation that we created and it's a study Bible with about 2 or 3 million notes. I wrote the notes for the Torah and Joshua and Judges and Psalm 82 and Proverbs 8 and a few other passages. It's free, and so that's a good resource just generally. It's www.faithlifebible.com and it also comes with a Bible dictionary—the *Lexham Bible Dictionary*. I have a few articles in there—one on the divine council, one on Rephaim, one on the image of God, that sort of thing. But those are good resources, just in terms of something that everybody in your group certainly (and I would think even people in your church that are not in your group specifically) can certainly use for Bible study. It's free, so it's right there. It's available, and it's why we made it.

Beyond that, there are certain websites that would certainly help. You're probably best served if I give you a list through email on those. You could actually send me an email with what kinds of things you want to be able to do or to read, and I can probably find some things that will be free and useful at the same time. So that's what I recommend. Just in terms of those strategies, I did a blog post on "Heiser's Laws of Bible Study," where I list a few things that I think are helpful. However, having said that, I could send parts of my book. I wrote a series that's going to be out again in May—the *60 Second Scholar* series. I had self-published that, and then it got picked up by a big publisher and it's going to be out in May.

But there are probably 15 or 20 little readings in there that are about methods—ways to think about Bible study—that I could just send electronically, as well. Yeah, give me a list of the kinds of things you want to think about or want to read, and then I'll look for that stuff on this end and send it. We want it to be digital because it's convenient. You can print it or put it on a phone or whatever, and we don't want it to cost anything.

FM: Thank you, thank you!

MH: By the way, if you all wanted copies of **Supernatural** in English, I could send you physical copies. You'll have to let me know.

DM: Most welcome. Yeah, I'll send you an address that can get here quick. Very generous of you, Doctor!

FM: Yeah!

MH: You more or less have to just tell me what you're needing and we'll figure out a way to get it to you.

1:30:00 **DM:** In terms of the translation project, we'll just ask for a few copies so multiple translators can have a copy to work on, probably using the method they used with *The Unseen Realm*. It appears that it will not be that difficult to get this translation done here. We have experienced translators. They've certainly been tested on the more rigorous material already, so they're ready to... yeah, absolutely.

FM [Translated by Bruna]: Dr. Heiser, we also want to ask you... I don't know if you've had any exposure to the Albanian language?

MH: I have not.

FM [Translated by Bruna]: Because through the study, we've seen that some Hebrew words find their true meaning in Albanian. For example, the word *nephilim*. We have an Albanian word that says *nephilim*, which stands for "in the beginning."

MH: [laughs] Well, that's interesting!

DM: That's literally true.

FM [Translated by Bruna]: Or the word [sounds like *kokabay*] for "the morning star." In Albanian, it can be translated a verb: "I can make you the heads," which means the first thing that comes.

MH: That's "morning star" language in astronomy—the star that appears first over the horizon, yeah.

Bruna: So it's a translated verb from Hebrew to Albanian...

MH: It's very interesting.

DM: That's right, it's very interesting about this because Albanian actually has root words, Doctor, that are some of the oldest root words that are still used in modern languages. So it has roots that go far, far back. And no one knows the true genesis of the language or all the circumstances around it. It's quite interesting.

MH: What is the tradition or the history (I know there's a blurred line between **those** two things: history and tradition) about bringing the gospel to that region of the world? In other words, is there a strong tradition of some apostolic presence there, like there is with Andrew when he got to this and that country and that sort of thing? What's the history of that? Can you tell me?

FM: We started the history of the gospel starts from Apostle Paul. He speaks about Albania, but not Albania [unintelligible]. When he says "from Jerusalem to Illyricum I have fulfilled the proclaiming of the gospel of Christ," this is in the Romans 15:19. Here he's talking about Albania because Illyricum... Albania is part of Illyricum. The Apostle Paul has been here and he has started some churches in Albania.

MH: Paul is obviously going to be speaking Greek, Hebrew, probably Aramaic, as well. So you could have what scholars call loan-words that get adopted into a local language, especially if they're very specific—that they have religious import to them. They get adopted into the language and they just become part of it then. That's very interesting.

FM: Because even most of Greek words (old Greek words) have been persuaded by Albanian. For example, Aphrodite. In Albanian is *Afërditës*.

Bruna: Which stands for "the day is approaching." "Dawn is approaching."

DM: It's very interesting.

MH: That is interesting.

FM: But I can send you, Dr. Heiser, if you want it, some words from the Bible that can have meanings in the Albanian language.

1:35:00

MH: I would like to see that. That would be interesting. Well, let's see... Is there anything else I wanted to ask or to know? One more question before we wrap up:

As far as your study group and the church, what percentage of the church is in this group? In other words, do you have a church with a building? Is this a house church network? What's the situation there? I'm just curious. I don't have any particular reason to ask, but I'm just wondering what the relationship is between the group. I know it's pastor-led and then the church itself.

FM [Translated by Bruna]: Rilindja Church has two Sunday services. One of the services approximately gathers 300 people in the afternoon. The morning service approximately 200. We started the second service only two months ago. But also Rilindja has two other churches, one in the rural area of Tirana. It's not a very big church—approximately 100 adults and 40-50 children. Nearly three years ago, we started another church in another area of Tirana, which is the capital of Albania. And that's a small church for the moment. But Rilindja is the mother church in Tirana. When it comes to the group that is currently studying your book, maybe a little less than half of it. Nine of them are members of the leadership team of the church, and at the same time they are home group leaders. So they are able to introduce elements from the book during their studies with their home groups. They are members of the church in Tirana who want to go deep in the Word of God, and they are full of passion for the Word. When it comes to the intellectual element, for example, all of them have university degrees. Only one of them has a high school diploma. For example, part of the group are four medical doctors. We have economists in the group and [unintelligible]. So it's a consolidated group. And they look for work to [unintelligible] studies.

1:40:00

In Tirana, we are not only studying the book together, but this has helped us also get closer and stronger in our friendship with one another. And also we are able to communicate with one another through the What's App. We have established a group, so we are able to communicate. And we are all online, in a way, communicating. We have a question as we read. Someone can post it in the group, and then we start giving ideas of what did it stand for. It's really a [unintelligible] in a way. We've decided that once we complete the study of this book, we will wait maybe for a suggestion for our next study book. And once this group finalizes reading *The Unseen Realm*, we will be starting another study group so the people that have already studied *The Unseen Realm* will continue with a second book. The first group will continue and we'll start again with the materials we've already prepared. So much more that we will have ready available materials.

MH: Absolutely. Well, that sounds like a thriving group. It's an intentional group, obviously. Boy, for everybody listening to this [laughs], whether you're in the U.S. or outside the U.S., this is what you should be doing, honestly. What this group is doing is what you should be doing—just sharing the content, getting people interested. People have to be stimulated just to... I hate to say it, but to get interested in their Bible. In your case, you had all these questions and you were already interested, but some Christians just need to be shown that there are things to think about here that are really important and to sort of spark that

interest. Well, I'm really happy that we could do this and connect and that you could be part of the 200th episode. But apart from that, just to hear it. Get me the information we talked about in an email and we can get you some other things, and then we can continue the conversation about... The translation is already happening, but how to pay you and get that money to the church. And then you guys can handle it however you want. You'll know how best to do that.

DM: Absolutely, Doctor. We'll follow up. I think you said more Christians need to be somehow prodded into doing this, and it's really, I think, a shame that in places like the U.S. and other countries where we have so many resources and this is so much more available, people just aren't interested. I think it's because in some way they're sort of taught not to be, through a variety of circumstances. I feel very strongly that we have to start breaking up those artificial walls—or breaking them down, really—and bringing real Bible to people because I've been to...

MH: I would agree with that, but when I think of the Church, I don't think of the U.S.

DM: That's true!

MH: I have to work in English so I'm stuck with that, but with Miqlat to do the translations... This year we're going to try to produce discipleship material or something to keep that going. The Church is a whole lot bigger than the West, and I'm not thinking that it's my mission in life to wake sleeping American Christians. It's wonderful to do that, and *Unseen Realm* does do that, but that's just not how I think about the Church.

DM: Yeah, well that's good. It's good. Again, I think people outside of our country are more open to really... I think this is just proof of it—what we've seen here in Albania. I think you mentioned in a recent podcast that you're doing translations in a lot of languages that you didn't expect to be doing.

MH: I had no idea, yeah.

DM: Polish, I think you mentioned, and some others. All of those ex-Communist countries where people are much more open to seeing the scripture for what it is and what it says and not what they're told it says. That's very interesting.

MH: Well, thank you all, and those in your group that are just listening and didn't verbally participate, thank all of you for your dedication. Like I said, I admire it, and this is pretty much exactly the kind of thing that I just want everybody who reads the book to do—to multiply it and get the content out. Thank you very much.

1:45:00

FM: Dr. Heiser, it really was a privilege for me to talk to you. Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to use your book and to have permission to make a copy of the chapters, because the guys are working on the materials. And so thank you again!

MH: You're welcome.

DM: It's a real privilege, Dr. Heiser, and thank you for all that you do and for all of the dedication that you've shown to this. It's really... You're a light to us all and a blessing. Thank you so much for that.

MH: Well, you're welcome, and thank you.

Bruna: Thank you, thank you.

TS: Well, there you go, Mike! Naked Bible around the world!

MH: Yeah, to say the least. Every one of those groups and ministries and just people in these places taking the content... It's remarkable, it's admirable—every one of them. This is the kind of thing that when I wrote *Unseen Realm*, I was really hoping would happen. And then when the podcast sort of started becoming what it is... When you basically contacted me out of the blue and said, "Hey, this is kind of a dumb thing to stop doing your podcast!" [laughs] When you talked me back into that, it's like, yep, this is kind of what we were hoping for, as far as getting the content out and having it be meaningful and beneficial. So this was a good one.

TS: I had no doubt, Mike, actually, because I knew the importance of this content. It actually doesn't surprise me and shock me. I'm just glad.

MH: You had to rattle my cage there. That was a good thing! [laughs]

TS: Well, it's been fun, and hopefully... We have no plans to stop.

MH: Nope, none at all. We'll blink and then we'll have 300! There it will be.

TS: I know! And we're going to Israel this year and we were thinking that maybe this would coincide with that trip, but it didn't. But we're going to have to do something special for 300, Mike. We're just going to have to do something. We're going to force ourselves, because that will be four or five years into it, so we're going to have to do something spectacular for 300. We're going to have to just force ourselves to do it.

MH: Where do you want to go? [laughing]

TS: Maybe we'll go to Albania.

MH: That's what I'm hearing in all that! "I want to go somewhere!"

TS: Maybe we'll do a world tour and interview these people live. Maybe something like that, or we'll have some big party and we'll have everybody come or something. I don't know. We need to figure something out, because we've got to do something fun.

MH: Okay, I'm not going to argue against it. I can just hear the wheels turning already.

TS: Absolutely. Well, we've got 100 episodes to come up with something. We've got a while. We could do something. We can figure something out. All right, Mike. Well, it's been fun and we appreciate how you keep cranking out the content. And we're just going to keep chugging along!

MH: Yeah, I like the topical stuff—the Q&A's and whatnot. There's variety there. And then you do enough of those and it's like, "Okay, I'm in the mood for the book study now." It's not getting old at all.

TS: Well, we appreciate everybody who has listened to us and we just want to say a heartfelt thank you. And God bless everybody out there who listens to our show and spreads the Naked Bible concepts to their church and their friends and family and wherever they may go. Mike, hopefully in 2018 and beyond we're going to continue to grow and grow and grow! So I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.