

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 208

Q&A 25

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**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

### Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- Can we equate the worship of Zeus at Pergamum to the worship of Satan? [1:30]
- What gives rise to the universal hostility that necessitates regeneration? [7:25]
- Why is there a need for Christians to rule over others in the New Earth, and who will that be? [17:40]
- Does the word “as” in “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” mean “in the same manner as” or “at the same time as?” [20:40]
- How do you stay grounded in the truthfulness of the Bible in the context of scholarship, which often raises doubts? [27:50]

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 208: our 25<sup>th</sup> Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing, sir?

**MH:** Good. Busy, as usual. Kind of looking forward to a Virginia trip. For people who want to know about that, I'm going to be in Virginia Beach in a little bit. You can go up to the website and check that out. If you're in the area, please come!

**TS:** And also, our Israel trip is getting pretty close, so are you making preparations?

**MH:** Yeah, that is looming over... No, I haven't! [laughing]

**TS:** Me, either! I probably won't pack until the day of. I don't know how you are, but I'm pretty bad about that stuff.

**MH:** I still have to think about what I'm doing. I haven't done that yet, so there you go. That's kind of where I'm at.

**TS:** I hear you on that. All right, Mike. Well, let's just cut to the chase and get into it. We've got about five questions this episode. If you're ready, I'm ready.

**MH:** Sure.

**TS:** All right, let me just read all of this here from Justin. Justin is going to start off our episode with the first question. His question is:

1:30

**When Revelation 2:13 refers to Satan's throne being in Pergamum, my NASB 77 Key-Word Study Bible had a reference to this possibly alluding to a massive altar to Zeus. Now, when corrupt elohim / fallen angelic beings are ruling over or deceiving nations, I assume that they aren't accurately and honestly representing themselves. Lying is, after all, the native language of Satan. So, if this footnote is true, would we assume that when ancient Greeks worshiped Zeus, they were actually worshiping the "Original Rebel?" himself, as opposed to some other spiritual being hiding behind the identity / facade / persona of Zeus? We would say that Satan is not omnipresent in the same way that God is... so would this area actually be his territorial HQ at one point?**

**MH:** No, I would answer the question "no" for a number of reasons. Scripture itself never specifically identifies Satan with one point of geography. He'd be "the god of this world." Just think of a phrase like that.

The other issue is that it's really not possible to create one-to-one correspondences like the question sort of angles for or suggests or asks. In the case of Zeus, I think there is something to the reference that was described there about Pergamum and this altar to Zeus. So then you'd have to ask the question, "Why is that conceived of or thought of in (for lack of a better way of putting it) Satanic language?" I think there's a conceptual reason for it, but it's not that we have the ability to identify what entity/god the Greeks or Romans or Egyptians (or whoever it was) were talking about as this particular biblical figure over here. There's no way for us to make those kinds of assessments or judgments. Scripture doesn't really give us that kind of information. In the case of Zeus, Zeus derives from old Greek *Dios* or *Deus* and the old Indo-European *Dyas*, which is Sanscrit *dyaus*. All of those terms mean "sky" or "heaven," and I think that's the conceptual link. You don't have sky or heaven as a meaning of *satan* or *diabolos* (devil). These are different terms. It forbids this one-to-one equation.

But if Zeus was conceived of as the sky god—the god of the heavens—just like Yahweh was, and he is also referred to as the Most High... Thinking about it that way is helpful here because by this time, you're in the New Testament period and you've got the association of Satan on a number of fronts with being in control of the earth/world, and also sort of being portrayed as this kind of rival who wanted to be like the Most High. He wanted to be lord of the Divine Council and that sort of thing. He wanted to be lord of heaven. And so if you're thinking about Satan in

those terms, and then you run into a deity that the Greeks worship called Zeus, who is referred to as the Most High or the god of heaven (even his name is identified with that), that's the connection. In other words, Zeus would be viewed as a usurper or as kind of a conceptual counterpart to the fallen being in the Hebrew Bible that wanted to be the highest authority—he wanted to be the Most High, wanted to be the god of the Council or the god of heaven. So you don't have a direct relationship with the names, the terms (*satan*, *diabolos*, Zeus, Satan)... You can't make these neat identifications on the basis of the terminology. You can see how in this case the writer of Revelation would think of Zeus along the same lines as the original rebel who wanted to be the Most High, because that's sort of a title that is attributed to Zeus, the god of heaven. Again, this is what the name means.

So there's a conceptual congruence, but there's no way to fill out a roster [laughs] like you would in baseball or football. "This one's at third base, this one's at shortstop..." You can't do that. You can't say, "This name is this deity over here in the Bible, or this figure, like Satan." It's just not that easy. We don't have the data for that. The only time you can approximate that, in terms of names, is when the Hebrew Bible will actual use, like the name of Baal, at a particular location. Baal is often part of toponyms (place names). So okay, we know who was worshiped there. There are things like that you can do, but *satan* is not a geographical name, it's a functional name, and it obviously has a long and varied history from the Old Testament through the Second Temple period and on into the New Testament. To sort of try to strike a specific equivalent in Greek religion to that entity... you just can't do it with terminology. But conceptually, you can see why they would think that way about Zeus.

**TS:** Chris from Grand Rapids has a question about how regeneration fits with Mike's view on predestination, election, and the fall.

7:25

**It would seem to me that a person's "spiritually deadness," cannot be explained simply as the product of making bad use of free will or the commission of actual sins after the age of accountability. What gives rise to this universal hostility necessitating regeneration?**

**MH:** I don't quite understand the last sentence: "universal hostility." Hostility to what? Setting that aside, I wouldn't equate spiritual deadness with sinning. Sinning has to do with acts of sin. You're making decisions, and there's a free will element in there. So I don't make them synonyms. Spiritual deadness, in my view, is the condition of being estranged from God, the source of spiritual life. Calvinists, of course, make spiritual deadness about an inability to believe, based on the idea that dead people can't do anything. They're dead! But that presses the focal point of the metaphor (a dead body) into an unnecessary service. That is, it takes all the aspects of the metaphor and then loads them into the discussion. That's an intentional but unnecessary use of the metaphor, so I have a bone to pick with the Calvinists here.

The spiritual death topic ultimately hinges on how one defines death. For Calvinists, death is the absence of conscious life. You see what they did there? They loaded consciousness onto the idea of death. They load that aspect of the metaphor of a dead body into the discussion. Other people won't. There's no cosmic rule about how little or how much you use a metaphor—how many of its components. But Calvinists basically won't tell you that because it doesn't serve their use of the metaphor. If you define death as the absence of conscious life... In other words, if you define spiritual death based on all of the elements of a dead body (a dead body obviously has no conscious life)... If that's how you frame spiritual deadness—that you're unable to believe because dead bodies don't do anything and they can't make decisions... If that's how you're approaching it, if you define death as the absence of conscious life, then you can say that spiritual death is the inability to believe, which is why Calvinists do that. Or you could say that it's the absence of any volitional impulse. Again, this is the kind of thing Calvinists are going to be saying in their theological system.

10:00 But if we define death as the absence of life more generally, not pressing consciousness into the metaphor and, hence, into the definition, and then further, we view the source of life as God, we get my definition. Again, I didn't make it up, it's just one I prefer. We get: "spiritual death is estrangement from God." It's the idea of separation. All of that is why Calvinism, then, on the other side, defines regeneration as an imbuelement with life so as to be enabled to make a choice. See, there's the consciousness element again. But that means that no human can actually be drawn to Christ or God until regeneration occurs. I know they don't want to say that, but I want you to think about it. How is it that people... I would say every person can relate to being drawn or attracted to or intrigued by some thought or action that led to a gospel decision? In all of our testimonies, somebody said something that drew our curiosity or that drew on us emotionally—that got us to move down the path a little bit toward a salvation decision. But if you're a Calvinist, you have to say, "That's God just doing it, and your consciousness isn't engaged at all because you're spiritually dead, and dead people can't do anything. You're just like a zombie or an automaton or a robot or something." They have to do that because they want to define regeneration as the enablement to believe, because of their believe of the *Ordo Solutis*—the order of salvation. They want to come up with this neat chain of things that happen in salvation, like justification, regeneration... what order do they come in? Calvinists are kind of absorbed with that kind of thing.

So if you're going to sort of have a person be void of any volitional element prior to regeneration, then how is it possible that anyone can respond to *anything* in any way prior to being regenerated? That's my question, because our experiences... I think all of us that have a testimony of faith in Christ, our experiences are contrary to that. We weren't passive. We weren't inactive. Our brains were not disengaged. We actually heard something and we had these little micro responses to it that God used to move us down the road toward an actual

presentation of the gospel or actually committing in our faith. Otherwise, you have a brainless, mindless being. You have human beings that are no longer self-aware in a Calvinist system, prior to regeneration. It just doesn't make any sense.

To try to be a little more organized in my thoughts, you can't say that you were consciously drawn to the gospel before your consciousness was regenerated. In other words, the approach of Calvinism, I think, just implodes. You're no longer a sentient being. You're no longer self-aware. To put it another way, if your consciousness is detached from spiritual attraction, how can you be drawn? You have to notice things, you have to make decisions, you have to be curious... these are all activities of consciousness. Calvinists want to turn all of that off, but then we have humans without self-awareness. That seems self-serving at best for a definition, and kind of silly at worst. There are other reasons, but this is part of the reason I think it's a lot more coherent to define spiritual death, not as something that involves the shutting off of consciousness or of self-awareness or of all volitional ability. I think it's more coherent to define spiritual death as estrangement from God, and therefore, defining regeneration as a new birth—that is, being born into the family of God and being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That doesn't cancel out people from freely responding in curiosity, we'll say, about the gospel, or responding due to some emotional need or connection that salvation meets. So free will, for me, relates to responding to things that draw one to the gospel, to make a decision to believe (or to reject it). I'm saying you don't need to first be regenerated to respond because you're already self-aware. Free will also relates to choosing sin—choosing rebellion, choosing acts of sin.

15:00

I would need to add that the Holy Spirit... This always gets us into the thing, "Well, if you're indwelt by the Holy Spirit and born in the family of God, what about that series in Hebrews about rejecting faith later on?" Well, I would say we need to add that the Holy Spirit is the down payment of salvation in the sense that his residence in us is proof of God's grace and forgiveness and his promise to enable us to keep believing and serve him. But the Holy Spirit can be quenched and grieved, and the New Testament tells us this.

His presence doesn't guarantee that we cannot reject the faith. The guarantee involved is something like, "Yes, if you believe, the Holy Spirit can see you through to the end." All those who overcome and keep believing were enabled to do so by the power of the Holy Spirit, not their own strength or cleverness. Our salvation is not due to our strength any more than it was due to our merit. We have to believe. And if we do, the Holy Spirit will remain and keep us. That whole idea is akin to the Old Testament presence of God, which could leave a place. It left the temple. In the curses in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, God said, "I'm gonna be outta here! I'm your God and you're my people, that's all well and good. You're elect, that's all well and good. But if you corrupt the land through your moral abominations, to a certain extent, I'm going to remove you or I'm going to leave. This ground is no longer fit for my presence, and I'm outta here." What I'm

describing is very consistent with that. Again, I think we have continuity of thought here.

If we endure to the end, if we keep the faith, the Spirit will remain and keep us. If we believe—if we keep believing—the Spirit is going to be there to see us through to the end. The Spirit of God will not coexist with the denial of the living God in our hearts. If you don't take my position, that's what you're left with. You not only have unbelievers in heaven, but you have the Spirit of God coexisting with the denial of the living God in your heart. And that's just a theological oxymoron there. Of course, the living God there is the incarnate Christ, so we're talking about faith in Christ here.

To sort of summarize this, the Holy Spirit gets the credit for our perseverance, but not the blame for our unbelief. We are never relieved of the need to believe the gospel. That isn't how the offer of eternal life works, though evangelicalism has sort of defined it that way. The gospel is not words to be mouthed, like an incantation. It is a truth to be believed, and to which we must remain loyal in that belief to have eternal life. "Whoever believes in him" (John 3:16) is in the present tense. We're either in a state of belief, or we're not.

**TS:** Lance from Cape Town, South Africa, has a question:

17:40

**Christians are seen as priest-kings and there is, if I have understood things correctly, the idea of them ruling over the nations after the new heavens and earth are ushered in and God takes up his residence on earth. Who will rule whom? Why is there a need for such rulership if all are resurrected Christians and the earth is full of the glory of the lord and sin and death no longer exist?**

**MH:** A couple of things here. The question at the end there presumes that "rule" is somehow describing the restraint of sin or the restraint of something that's ready to burst forth and ruin everything again. I don't think that you have those conditions in the New Earth, but that's just a general response.

More broadly, I would say this is a metaphor. These are all metaphors. These are ways of describing the relationship we will have in the New Earth with Jesus in that place. There's no need involved. A word like "need" is not appropriate. God doesn't need anything. He doesn't need co-rulers. He doesn't need the Church now. He doesn't need the Divine Council. But he uses those things so that his created beings get to participate with him in enjoying and working with him to either further or maintain that which he has made—for our benefit, not for his. God has no lack or need. So I think that's the way we need to think about this. God does things in a way that involves us for our sake—that we get to participate. Rulership is about participation and governance or stewardship with our king. Since the New Testament describes unequal reward for all those who are saved, it would seem that at least part of that refers to hierarchical



20:00 governance. So I think the idea of hierarchy is there—it's implied by the inequality of reward for all those who do have eternal life. We're not talking about salvation here. So I think it's inferred or implied that there's going to be some sort of hierarchical participation. That's going to be part of the "reward package," if you want to put it like that. But again, that's not about restraining evil. It's not about filling a lack in God. It's about us getting to participate with the Lord—being made co-rulers, co-heirs, and all this language in Revelation 2-3 and lots of other places. That's what it's about.

Beyond that, we're not given any details about how this works. We're not given any specific job descriptions or anything like that. When I run up against that wall, I don't speculate and call it "teaching." I just don't speculate. I try to just take things as far as the text allows us to go and just leave it there.

**TS:** Tracy has a question:

20:40 **Regarding the line in the Lord's Prayer translated generally as "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," or "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," my question is about the "as." I have generally taken it to mean "in the same manner as," but I have come to realize that it could also mean "at the same time as." Does the Greek provide any insight into which was intended? Both certainly would seem to be appropriate. Such a little word to mean so much.**

**MH:** Yeah, I think generally to jump into this, the Lord's Prayer appears only in Matthew 6, so we're going to be going with Matthew 6:12-14 for this question. In the Greek New Testament, the passage reads, "Forgive us our debts as..." (and the Greek word is *hōs* there) "we forgive our debtors." There is no Greek word *hōs* later in verses 14 and 15 about the trespasses, so it only occurs in the one spot. Since the question revolves around that little conjunction (*hōs*), I wanted to point out that it's only in one part of it.

So the question suggests a choice between "in the same manner," which would be comparative, or "at the same time," which would be temporal (to use grammar-speak). You could probably argue that the comparative is the predominate semantic for the conjunction *hōs*. However, grammars do note temporal semantics for the conjunction in certain passages, so the "at the same time" translation is legit. You certainly have that possibility.

If we look this up in BDAG, which is the standard lexicon for the Greek New Testament, it will note that *hōs* can be a temporal conjunction. It will actually say that with the aorist it recommends the translation of "when" or "after." In other words, *when* something happens or *after* something happens, then you have that temporal sort of sense.

In Matthew, the verbs are aorist, so you have a temporal possibility there. You could translate it something like... Let me just go to Matthew 6 here for the actual example: "Forgive us our debts when we have forgiven our debtors" (or after we have forgiven our debtors).

If you go with "when," that's a little more closely coordinated—both sides of the forgiveness. "After" implies a little bit more chronology: this happens and then that happens. "When" gives this feeling of simultaneity, or something that approximates it. But there's no way to be any more granular than that.

Back to the question, does the Greek provide any insight into which of the semantic options was intended? About all you can say is that both certainly would seem appropriate and you could go with either—the comparison or the temporal idea. But there's no way to really say, "This is the case here and we can build an argument to exclude the other." I have to be honest, I don't really see the need to choose. Certainly, lesser forgiveness isn't in view, as though Jesus' words could be construed to mean that one's forgiveness is not of the same extent or the same quality or the same genuineness. So if you were opting for "in the same manner," let's go back to verse 12: "Forgive us our debts in the same manner that we have forgiven our debtors." That's implied. That's not something that can really be excluded, because to argue that it should be excluded would leave you with the possibility that Jesus is asking you to pray, "Lord, forgive us our debts in not quite the same way or to a lesser extent than we have forgiven..." [laughs]. It just doesn't make any sense. It's very obvious that without even thinking about the conjunction, Jesus is suggesting we have a one-to-one correspondence here. God's going to be inclined to forgive us as we have forgiven our debtors, and that's how we should be thinking about the situation.

25:00

So the comparative idea ("in the same manner") seems kind of intuitive. Now, when the comparison is God's own forgiveness (and that's what's being asked for in the prayer), then it makes little sense to turn the question into, "Father, forgive us to a halfway extent." It just seems intuitive.

Adding to that, just a little thought... If you go two verses later to Matthew 6:14, it seems to provide a chronology, so to speak, by virtue of the conditional particle. Verse 14 says (ESV):

**For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.**

"If" there is the Greek word *ἐάν* (*ean*). It's just what it sounds like: a conditional particle. That is typically followed (as in this case) by a subjunctive verb form. The verbs up in verse 12... One is an imperative: "forgive us our debts." The other one ("as we have forgiven others") is indicative. Imperative is the mood of command, indicative is the mood of reality; it just sort of states something that is.



Down here in verse 14, we have the subjunctive. The subjunctive is the grammatical mood of unreality. That is, it describes actions that haven't happened yet, like future, or that may or may not happen based upon conditions that are set. That's what we have here in verse 14:

**If you forgive others your trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.**

There's a contingency there. If that's the case, then you obviously have a chronology. One thing has to happen before the other. So you don't really have "at the same time" there. You do have a chronology there. You could take that chronology that's clearly presumed in verse 14 and then read verse 12 in light of it, but you would still have a temporal use of the conjunction. It may not mean "at the same time," but there's a time element there.

Just to recap here, either way *hōs* can be a comparative semantic ("in the same manner") or it can be temporal ("at the same time," or some sort of chronological time). Both of those are operable here, and I don't see the need to choose. I think the only thing you can eliminate is this simultaneity, only because of verse 14. Again, if you want to look at verse 14, you have an obvious condition: this has to happen before that does. Then you would be reading verse 12 in light of that temporal situation.

**TS:** Skip from Columbus, Georgia, has a personal question for you, Mike. He wants to know:

27:50

**How do you, as a Bible scholar, stay grounded in the Bible and the truthfulness it teaches on the gospel of Christ and the whole nine yards of evangelical, reformed doctrine of the Bible, knowing what you know about the Bible's historicity, etc., without going over the deep end and completely losing faith because of doubts about such things that cause many scholars, it seems, to become so liberal in their thinking that they completely abandon faith in the God of the Bible and in the Bible itself? How do you keep the faith and maintain a balance of a scholastic, deep knowledge of scripture and that of a simple, childlike, saving belief in what you are reading?**

**MH:** Well, the short answer to this (and this might sound a little bit harsh and possibly a little bit simplistic)... I've been a believer for 40 years, and trust me, this keeps rearing its ugly head with great regularity. The short answer would be the problem with so many other scholars (and just people who think in general) is that they lack imagination and they are content with either/or fallacious thinking. That just seems to be embedded in the human condition.

I'll try to unpack the longer answer. What I mean by that statement is that many scholars can't seem to think about the phenomena of scripture without using the vocabulary, the institutional structures, and the approaches handed down to them in their past by whatever religious context they happen to grow up in. They just can't seem to escape it. They can't seem to frame the phenomena or the discussion in any other way than this caricature they have living in their head. I don't know why, but I just don't suffer from that problem. [laughs] I'm not sure why. I'll confess that I don't know why that is. It just sort of *is*. But maybe examples will actually help here.

30:00

Let's just take a topical example, and I'll just relate some things about this in my own personal experience. Let's take the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Let's just jump in with a series of questions here, just so that you know how some scholars can't escape from thinking about it in certain ways. I'm going to suggest that's not a good thing—that's a lack of imagination and an embracing of either/or fallacious thinking.

So question: Why does Moses have to have written all of the Torah/Pentateuch? Why? Why does that have to be the case? If you're the Fundamentalist, this is where you're going to land. Fundamentalists and others who have sort of inherited that tradition, whether they realize it or not, go through some really odd machinations to make that idea work. Without getting too granular here, when I was at the Missler conference in Coeur d'Alene several months ago, I saw an example of this again. For some reason, the speaker feels compelled to justify Mosaic authorship of every portion of the Pentateuch. He whipped out this colophon argument about how Moses would have been using cuneiform tablets and how the cuneiform tablets had evidence of colophons (which is a way of ordering material) and Moses would have seen that and... It's all speculation. Frankly, it's just unnecessary, and there are actually some primary text problems with it, too, both in the Torah itself (with colophon language that doesn't work there) and outside in the cuneiform world. The point is, why do we feel compelled to go search high and low for what is really kind of a strange argument to justify this idea? Why? Why is the idea so important? Why *must* we say this?

Second question: Why could Moses not have written *any* of it? This is the polar opposite of the Fundamentalists. This is where your liberal/critical scholars are. "Moses didn't write any of this stuff!" Catch what I'm saying here. This crowd is just as fundamentalist, but in the opposite direction. They cut themselves off from thinking critically and creatively about their own set of ideas.

I'll give you a couple of examples here. When I was at the University of Pennsylvania, one of the things I did... Penn had two libraries that people in my field were supposed to use. One was in the museum. If you're kind of bent archaeologically, that's where you'd spend your time. The other one was the Semitics Reading Room, which was in a different building. So one night before class, I decided I was going to go up to the Semitics Reading Room and do a

little thought experiment. So I went up there. They've got thousands of books there. I had a couple of hours to kill, and it was early in the semester, so I wasn't burdened with assignments. I went up to the room, and here's what I wanted to know. I had two or three years of seminary under my belt, so I was pretty well familiar with evangelical publishers (what outfits were evangelical publishers). The little game I played that evening was, "I'm going to go through the stacks at the Semitics Reading Room at the University of Pennsylvania in the glorious Ivy League and see how many books published by evangelical publishers I can find. I found *one*. One, and I can tell you exactly what it was: It was R.K. Harrison's *Introduction to the Old Testament*.

That generated some questions. Are you not aware that these other publishers exist? Surely the librarian must be aware. Who orders the books for these things? That would probably be the faculty. Is the faculty unaware that these other scholars have an evangelical commitment and publish through these publishing houses? They're writing good books. After all, they've got their degrees from Harvard and Penn and all these other places. They surely can't be unaware of that, so are they afraid? Do they want to filter the knowledge? Do they want to limit exposure? Do they want to just eliminate ideas that they don't like? The answer to all of those questions is somewhere in there. One of those is "yes."

35:00 It taught me very early on that there was a knowledge filter here. It just worked in the opposite direction. The Fundamentalists don't want you to look at the stuff the liberals say, and the liberals don't want you to look at the stuff the Fundamentalists say. We're using the two polar extreme terms here. So the liberals want to come down on this with, "Oh, it's JDEP. It's Documentary Hypothesis. Moses didn't write a word of this. Maybe Moses didn't even exist." They're just all the way in the other direction. Then you have the other people who are just like, "Moses had to write every word. We're going to come up with some cockamamie theory to get him to be the author of every word." My question is, why can't you have some of both? Why can't you have the use of sources? Why can't you have non-Mosaic authorship with Mosaic authorship? Why is it either/or? That's a fallacy. That is fallacious thinking, okay?

I don't know where it comes from, it's just sort of in my head, but I have carried that *everywhere* and in every topic and with every question. I want coherence. I don't want either/or fallacies handed to me. I don't have to accept the way you frame a topic or a question. Is there a cosmic rule that says the way you articulated the question is the only way it can be articulated? Is there some cosmic rule that says the way you answer the question is the only way it can be answered? No, and no! So guess what? I don't need to play by those rules! And I have found you have as much fear- and knowledge-filtering on both sides of basically any issue. I don't know if this is my role in the universe here to just point this out. It's so obvious, but it happens for different reasons.

So I look at these topics and say, why can't it be something in the middle? Why can't it be a little bit of both? Why can't we have some imagination here? Why? Why do we need Mosaic authorship? Why is it a hill to die on? Who said so? And in a lot of cases, you have somebody who will affirm obvious data points about the topic and then extrapolate it to the completely unnecessary. Like, "Without Mosaic authorship, the Bible is a crock. I hate it now. My faith is in vain." Well, that's just kind of an extreme reaction. Why is that a reasonable conclusion? On the other side, "If Moses didn't write X, Y, Z... because we have sources... then he didn't write anything at any time and it's all made up, and maybe Moses wasn't even a real person." It's just this total polar reaction. I look at it and say, why can't we affirm the obvious? There's editing here. Hey, if we presume Moses was alive and raised in Pharaoh's house like the Bible says, he would have been literate. What is there to prevent him from writing stuff down that would get edited later? The answer is, nothing prohibits him from doing that! Nothing prohibits the Torah from being a little bit of both. Is there something theologically wrong with that? "Oh, well the New Testament refers to the Torah as the 'Law of Moses.'" Yeah, it refers to the book of Daniel as "Daniel." It refers to the books of Samuel as "Samuel." What else would you call it? Because it's a book that is associated with the time period of Moses and the events of Moses' life, and the law that began during the Mosaic period (and, of course, lasts long thereafter) has these associations with it. So you wouldn't call it the "Book of Joshua" or the "Law of Joshua." It's a normative expression. I put this on my blog. "Law of Moses" is a simple Hebrew construct phrase. The construct phrase has semantics. It could be the law that *originated* with Moses. It could be the law that was *possessed* by Moses. It could be the law that was *associated* with Moses. It could be the law that's *about* Moses. All of those things can be true, and none of them require that Moses wrote every word.

These things just don't get thought about very well, and this is why I said in my short answer that we've got a lack of imagination and a willingness to embrace either/or fallacious thinking. I don't suffer from either. A lot of people I know don't suffer from either. But too many people I know come across like they're trapped. Either they want to be trapped [laughs] or they're trapped in a victimized way in one mode of thought. On the critical side, I think it's something between an apathy and a disdain for the opinions of others. They don't really see the need to even think about these things.

I'll give you one more illustration. In my doctoral program at the University of Wisconsin, we're sitting there in Pentateuch Seminar and one of the criteria for the Source Hypothesis (JDEP—the Documentarian view) is that the documents (specifically J and E, and to some extent some of the others) depend on the vocabulary choice for the names of God. The names of God are one of the criteria. So the J source uses Yahweh, the divine name. "Jehovah" is how the Germans would have said it. And the E sources uses "EI" words—EI, *elohim*, EI-this, EI-that. So when we see the various names for God, that indicates a separate hand and a separate source. Got the basics?

40:00

So I actually asked in class, "Well, we know that the Septuagint, which of course had a Hebrew base and the Hebrew base was different than the Masoretic Text in places... We know that the Septuagint didn't have the divine name. It doesn't have the word *kyrios*, because that's how the Septuagint consistently translates the divine name—*kyrios*, 'Lord.' We know that the Septuagint in 110 or 115 places apparently had a different name for God than the divine name in the Torah. Maybe it had an 'El' name or something like that. Doesn't that kind of mess up the neatness of the sources for the Hebrew text of the Torah—that you can just say when you encounter one it's one author and when you encounter one it's the other author? Because if we throw in 115 differences, doesn't that kind of muddy the waters there? Shouldn't that make a difference? Doesn't that make the argument weaker?" And the answer I got from my professor in a doctoral program was, "It's probably just a lazy translator. The Septuagint translator was just sloppy." [laughs] Again, you've heard me say this on the podcast before: that day was one of the reasons why I said later in the same class [laughs]... (it's a wonder I got out). I said later in the same class that I thought that every doctoral student in biblical studies should be required to take a course in logic, because that was just not an adequate response. It just wasn't. That was not a coherent response. I'm sorry, but it's not. It's not a data-driven response. Critical scholarship is supposed to be about data. Well, that answer was not about data. That answer was, "I'm too lazy to have looked, and even if I look, I like this approach so much that I don't care about the data."

I could throw in a few more of these, but back to the basics of my response to this. It's nothing mystical. I just think that we need to be able to think about topics and questions and answers to questions in ways that don't violate clear thinking (clear logic), that account for outliers (that are not content to just dismiss parts of our argument that don't work), and that are not willing to accept either/or fallacies. To me, that makes it fun, because then you have to engage the material. You have to think about it. Here's where the role of imagination and creativity helps. Imagination is not that you're just making stuff up, but you're trying to reimagine how... in this case, how we got the Torah. How might this have worked in real time? Could Moses have had a role? Could other people have had roles? Could it have been done over long stretches of time? If you try to put it in real time and reimagine how this would have worked, are you able to come up with a more comprehensive view that accounts for the data in all its disparity? That's what I'm looking for.

So I just don't feel pigeonholed. I don't feel like I've got to do one thing or the other. There's no cosmic, karmic (if I want to use that word) rule that says there's a set of rules for how we must think or not think about scripture. I just know that. Again, I don't know why I really know it. It just seems sort of self-evident to me, but there it is. That lives in my head all the time. If that's what's living in your head...

45:00

Let me just throw in one other element. I'm a theist, I believe in God, I'm a Christian—all these basic ideas whose coherence has been defended quite capably for millennia. I'm not going to overturn any of those apple carts, and neither is anybody else. Trust me, people have tried for thousands of years. Given that assumption (that we have God in the picture), thinking creatively and trying to think big-picture about how these things might have happened in real time requires a Providential role for God in all of it. It just requires it, by definition. So then God becomes part of your thinking to answer the question, "How might this have happened? How would this have looked in real time? How would God have pulled this off using people?" Listeners here are going to know me well enough at this point, I would assume, to know that I don't believe the Bible is a divine book. One adjective is not sufficient. I believe it is a *divine-human* book. Both adjectives are necessary. To strip the humanity out of scripture is to undermine the doctrine of inspiration. To strip the human out of it, you make the Bible vulnerable to all sorts of criticisms. One adjective is not enough. You need both. If you can't find that view in the theology textbook, so what? Too bad. Get a better book! Think about it. There's no cosmic rule that "the way this is articulated in the book my pastor recommended" or whatever is where the inquiry ends. I think we just need to be a little more willing to think. Maybe it will just appeal to you to have a little more fun with it. Don't get trapped. Just don't get trapped into fallacious thinking about scripture and about what scripture says. I think that would serve you a long way.

I'm going to wrap it up here. That rambled a little bit, but I'm hoping the illustrations have a little bit of explanatory power to answer the question.

**TS:** I've even been asked, Mike, how getting this deep into the Bible has affected my faith, from friends of mine who are getting their M. Div. We've all heard stories of people who are going through seminary and begin questioning everything. I'm kind of like, "You know, if you're studying the Bible and you start to lose your faith, you're doing something wrong!"

**MH:** Yeah, the problem isn't the Bible! [laughter]

**TS:** I don't know, it just seems odd to me because the more you dive down, the more questions you have. For me, it seems to strengthen it and not confuse it or lose it, so I don't know.

**MH:** I'm always left with the question, "How would this have worked? How did God influence the writer to do this? What was the writer trying to do?" News flash: None of us live lives of autonomy. We're all influenced by people. If you're a theist, you're influenced by God. All these things. So the biblical writers are the same kind of people, and God has an interest in what they're doing, especially in something of this magnitude. Where is God in this set of circumstances? What do the data tell us about how this might have worked? To try to reimagine it... Imagination is not the enemy of biblical stories, unless you're using imagination



to just junk the truth propositions of scripture and substitute your own. When I talk about imagination, I mean creatively thinking about the data that you have in front of you. I think we need a little bit more of that.

**TS:** I'm amazed because I believe the Bible is a Living Word. You read it one day and it tells you something one day, and another thing another day. I get on some of these blogs or whatever and I see people having discussions. (If you're not in our Facebook group, you need to get in there. We almost have 2,000 people, Mike, in our Facebook Naked Bible group talking about some of these great topics.) But I'll go into some of these other groups around the internet, and talk about Christians reading the same thing and having the exact opposite viewpoint! They can read something or study something and they come away with something completely different than another person, and it's crazy how we Christians can't agree on some of the simplest things. We're all over the map. It's crazy.

50:00

**MH:** Some of that... This is not meant to sound critical, but you have a lot of sheep without a shepherd. What I mean by that is they may not have a lot of direction, but they haven't quit. I'm on their side. I wish they had more direction, but at the very least they haven't quit. So that's a positive thing in that respect. But it's negative in that they're just trying to do it on their own. That's why we do stuff like the podcast, to be honest. We try to give a little help there. But then you've got situations where people have sort of been funneled in one direction, and when the knowledge filter they were taught from very early on doesn't satisfy at some point, then they are tempted. Some of them just go all the way opposite, to just junk the whole thing and say, "None of this matters. None of this is going to help me and be any sort of guidance to me. I'm just going to wing it." They're going to get rid of it or wing it, and "whatever pops into my head is what scripture means," or "whatever the next person I like who says something I like, I'm just going to go with what that guy says." You have all these forces operating. You don't have anything... I shouldn't say "anything." You have a tremendous lack of discipline when it comes to method. You've got people who are charismatic and make certain arguments and get followings just because they're charismatic, and the people who follow them want to follow them because they didn't like the last person they were following, or they had no direction at all. It's kind of a mess, but at the end of the day, I'd still rather have that than people just quitting altogether.

**TS:** Absolutely. And that's why we need everybody listening right now to go out there and give us a review or a rating on iTunes or wherever you consume us. If you're on Facebook or social media, hashtag #NakedBible so people out there can get some guidance here. And we appreciate everybody that has done so to date.

And with that, Mike, we appreciate you answering our questions. I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.

