

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 219

Q&A 29

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**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

### Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions about:

- The need to renounce generational curses [3:00]
- The implications of an alternate timeline for Egyptian history [14:30]
- The potential for sin in the New Heaven/New Earth [23:50]
- Modern Jewish believers who are loyal to Yahweh but don't believe in Jesus [25:50]
- The "idol shepherd" in Zechariah 11:17 [27.30]

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, episode 219: our 29th Q&A episode. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how you doing?

**MH:** Pretty good. Pretty good. How are you?

**TS:** I'm doing good. I'm doing real good, since our first Naked Bible Conference is selling quite well. We probably have just a little over 100 tickets left. So I just want to urge people to not wait because I don't want them to miss out.

**MH:** Yeah, that would be a bad idea to wait.

**TS:** It would be a bad idea to wait. So I did want to let everybody know that I will be recording that, so just know that. Live-streaming is still up in the air. But I will record the video, and what we do with the video after that remains to be seen. So just know that at least it will be recorded. Mike, I'm getting a ton of emails about that. So I just want to officially put that out there, and as the summer goes on I will have more information about live-streaming and things of that nature, so there's still hope. So I want people...

**MH:** But you're not you're not guaranteeing that that the video taken will see the light of day anytime soon, though. We don't know what we're going to do with that, correct?

**TS:** Correct. It will see the light of day, but "soon" is the optimal word there. I wouldn't say soon.

**MH:** Soon might be a year, you know. Who knows?

**TS:** Hopefully not, but maybe. I just don't know yet. So as we inch closer to it and I work at more of these kinks to figure out what we're going to do, we'll have those types of answers for you. So just know, everybody that emailed me any questions about the video and live-stream and all that, it remains to be seen. At least there will be video, and when you get to see that, I don't know yet.

**MH:** Hey, I can bring Calvin along. He has a video camera.

**TS:** Yeah, there you go. There you go. Well.

**MH:** Or we can we can have everybody wear GoPros. How's that? Pass em out.

**TS:** That's exactly what we do not want. [laughter]

**MH:** That's where we're at right there.

**TS:** All right Mike. Well, we lied to you last week. You said we were going to do baptism of the dead, but we're actually going to do two Q&As, one this week and one next week. And then after that we'll pick up the topic about baptism of the dead. So I guess with that, you want to jump into these questions here?

**MH:** Sure, let's go.

**TS:** All right, our first one is from Stephanie, and she has a question regarding generational curses:

3:00

**In the book of Deuteronomy, it talks about the curse of the law and about blessings and curses. As Christians, are we still bound by those laws? Do we have to renounce what our parents did and our grandparents and so on?**

**MH:** Yeah, I'm not quite sure from this question exactly what curses Stephanie's talking about, because cursing shows up a number of times in Deuteronomy. If we're talking about curses tied to the land, I would say that's really not in view because the whole concept of the people of God isn't really tied specifically to the land, and/or Israel failed in those regards and they were cursed. I'm thinking of a passage outside Deuteronomy, like Leviticus 26. It was very clear: "If you do this

or that, I'm going to drive you from the land.” And that happened—that was the Exile, and so on and so forth.

If she's talking about that kind of stuff in Deuteronomy and the Leviticus 26 kind of stuff, there's not really much of a connection. But I'm gonna assume she's talking about Deuteronomy 5. This is one of those generational curse passages that is not attached to the land. It's a bit broader, let's put it that way—or at least it's not linked to that specific idea. On that assumption, just let me read Deuteronomy 5. I will start in verse 8 and go through verse 10. Again, I'm just guessing that this is probably what's behind the question. That passage says:

**<sup>8</sup>“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.**

Sidebar: there's your three-tiered cosmology again.

**<sup>9</sup>You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>10</sup>but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.**

5:00

So that's the end of the passage. And you get this “third and fourth generation” phrasing in this passage, so I'm guessing that's where this comes from. So it's the question, “Are we still bound by these laws?” In one sense sure, we're not supposed to worship other gods; we're not supposed to bow to other gods. The third and fourth generation thing, I think, though, is kind of really what's driving the bus here, and I would say that in my understanding.... I'm not alone here. Just in the academic understanding, “third and fourth generation...” That language is there because that essentially amounts to the lifespan of the person who commits the crime, so to speak. So biblically speaking, “generation” is actually not a terribly consistent thing to nail down in the Old Testament because the term is used in different contexts with different time spans, the longest of which would be a hundred years for a generation. So if you have this family heritage, if you want to take the long number, it's probably not something that's in the picture anyway. But when it comes to human life spans—human lineages, that sort of thing—you're dealing with a generation being roughly 20 years. And that's defined in terms of just life experience, where biblically-speaking, people would get married when they're younger than 20 years. They would have children and those children would grow up. They get married in their teen years or 20's and have babies, so on and so forth. So a generation, practically speaking, was roughly 20 years. If you have a third and the fourth generation, that's 60 to 80 years. Chances are the person who commits this offense is going to be dead by the end of the fourth generation. So this is another way of saying that there's

going to be an effect of this sin. God is going to visit the sin of the father as long as he lives. The rest of his life, he and his children are going to be affected by it. So “third and fourth generation” is pointing to a finite amount of time, even if you take the one instance I can think of where the term “generation” is sort of attached to something that would be longer than 20 years. In case people who are listening are interested in what I'm thinking of there, it's the Genesis 15 passage where God is conversing with Abraham about what's going to happen to his descendants. They're going to go down into Egypt and be in bondage there for 400 years, and if you look at the passage, you have four generations mentioned there. So you do the math: 400 divided by 4 is 100 years. But that's probably a broad general statement, because if you actually even go look at the generations involved in national Israel from Abraham's time all the way up there, it's not a very precise number.

So what the exact meaning of that is, again, is debated by scholars. But when it comes to actual physical genealogical generations, people typically in the biblical period got married before they were 20. So we use round numbers. So “third and fourth generation” is basically the natural lifespan of the person who commits the crime. In that sense we've got a situation where... Okay, let's just say that that's what's going on here. Is that fair? Why is God looking at it this way? Why does the passage say God's going to visit the iniquity of this person on the to the third and fourth generation—on the children? Part of this has to deal with the Middle Eastern/ancient Near-Eastern outlook that scholars would refer to as “corporate solidarity.” And the idea there is that the basic unit of society was not the individual, it was the family and the extended family. So you have instances, both positive and negative, in the Bible where a person will do something like a sin and their descendants will suffer because of that. And you have the opposite, as well, where if somebody does something good, then societally their descendants will reap the benefits of what their ancestor did. The positive example (one of the many) would be where David is basically trying to lobby Saul that, “I'm gonna go out there and kill Goliath.” He gets promised a bunch of things, and his descendants are included in the benefits that will accrue to David if he gets rid of Goliath. So you have this sort of social sense that (in David's case) if you do this, life is going to be better for your kids and their kids and so on and so forth. So there's this corporate idea going on in the ancient world, and that's very common. It's not just with Israel, but it's other civilizations, as well, at the time.

10:00

Now for this question, though, probably my favorite commentary on Deuteronomy is Tigay's. I've quoted it before. And I'll just read what Tigay says about this idea because there are other places in the Torah—in Deuteronomy, in fact—that are clear that there's individual responsibility going on. It's the idea that even though we have this sort of corporate mindset (basic unit of society and there's corporate solidarity and all that), it isn't necessarily the case that God is holding other people guilty for what somebody else does. There's a difference between suffering the effects of sin and being considered somehow a guilty party of something that happened before you were even born, so we have to balance

out how we look at this language with other passages in the Torah and specifically in Deuteronomy. So Tigay has a nice summary of this. He says:

Effective as this approach may have been [again, this this corporate thing], Deuteronomy 24:16 forbids its application by judicial authorities...

And he quotes the verse:

**Parents shall not be put to death for children nor children be put to death for parents. A person shall be put to death only for his own crime.**

That's the end of the verse. It's a very clear statement of individual responsibility. Tigay continues. He says:

...but experience showed that people often do suffer or benefit because of the actions of their ancestors. Cross-generational punishment by God is partially mitigated in the Torah itself. In the Torah, only Exodus 34:7 and Numbers 14:18 state without qualification that God visits the sins of fathers upon children in both versions of the Decalogue [that means both versions of the of the Ten Commandments]. The list of generations to be punished and rewarded is qualified by the phrases “of those who hate me” and “of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

And our passage (Deuteronomy 5:9-10) is one of those one of those qualifying passages.

The phrase is most likely referring to descendants, meaning that cross-generational retribution applies only to descendants who act as their ancestors did. In other words, God visits the guilt of the fathers on future generations that reject him and rewards the loyalty of ancestors to the thousandth generation of descendants who are also loyal to him. In other words, God punishes or rewards descendants for ancestral sins and virtues along with their own if they [the descendants] continue the deeds of their ancestors.

So that's the end of the Tigay quote. So in other words, we can't just sort of lift Deuteronomy 5:9-10 out and say, “Oh, one of your ancestors did something before you were even born and you're going to suffer for it. Now, you know God's going to remember that sin and he's going to hammer away at you.” Again, you have these other passages in the Torah that make it pretty clear that individual responsibility is important to God, and so you couple that with these qualifying ideas from other passages to say that essentially if you walk the same walk—if you walk in the steps of your ancestors who did this thing—you're going to pay for it. You're gonna suffer for it. So that's a little bit different than suffering the residual effects of a broken marriage or maybe alcoholism or something like

this—some sins that we're familiar with that have a long-lasting effect on people's lives or at least could. That's a little different than God holding you guilty for something that happened before you were ever born. What Tigay is suggesting here is that really isn't the case. There are these qualifying passages in the Torah that make following in their footsteps in a behavioral sort of way part of what's going on in these kind of statements in the Torah.

**TS:** Greg has our next question:

14:30 **In one of the podcasts, Dr. Heiser briefly mentioned the documentary *Patterns of Evidence*, which discusses an alternate timeline for Egyptian history. The producers also mentioned that the histories of surrounding nations are tied to the Egyptian timeline. Sounds like serious implications if the producers are correct.**

15:00 **MH:** Yeah, that's true. This is a question that is really, really complicated. It's really not possible to give any sort of detail in a format like this to this question. I'm going to give it some broad brushstrokes here, but even that is really not going to be adequate. If people out there in the audience are interested (and Lord help you if you are) in ancient chronology... I say that as somebody who used to *really* be into this subject and it sort of it became the Pit of Despair (for all the all of you who have watched *The Princess Bride*). It is a quagmire of obtuseness, complexity, and difficulty, and really no resolution. But if, nevertheless, you're still interested in ancient chronology, please subscribe to the newsletter. I've put four or five articles in the protected folder for newsletter subscribers by two authors one of whom is Rohl and the other one is John Bimson. The articles essentially talk about reading the Exodus chronology, and there you're going to get all the nuts and bolts, but I'm going to try to broad-brushstroke this as best I can.

The issue is that you do have serious problems in what is called "Third Intermediate Period" chronology when it when it comes to ancient Egypt. Some of the listeners may know you have Old Kingdom, New Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, all that stuff. But between those kingdoms you have intermediate periods (quick crash course on Egyptian history). You have kingdoms when you have one Pharaoh and everything is sort of solid and stable in society. You have intermediate periods when people are competing to be pharaohs and things are just chaos. So that's how Egyptologists break Egypt's history down.

So during one of these (the Third Intermediate period, which a lot of that overlaps with the Divided Monarchy in Israel), there are really significant problems. This is actually where David Rohl... he dealt with TIP (Third Intermediate Period) chronology in his dissertations, so he sort of camps out here. I've read a number of articles by Rohl on this, and I think he's right: there are serious problems here.

This is not the neat picture that other Egyptologists like to portray. So I think he's got a point.

Now the short version here is that you have missing names in king lists. There are gaps in the king list for TIP chronology, and other issues as well. If you look at it the way Rohl looks at it, you can compress the Third Intermediate Period by a couple hundred years. Now, that means when you compress that period, all the rest of Egyptian history compresses with it. The timeline shifts forward in this case, since the Third Intermediate Period is late period. And if you do that, then the synchronisms between Egyptian history and biblical stuff change, because you're moving the timeline. For anybody who's seen *Patterns of Evidence*, they try graphically to illustrate this, and I think do a pretty nice job of it visually. But if you compress the chronology, everything shifts, and this is what Rohl is essentially arguing. Now people who don't like Rohl would say, "Well, you can't do that because there's a clear synchronism between one of those pharaohs in the Third Intermediate Period—Pharaoh Sheshonq—and a Biblical reference to Pharaoh Shishak during the time of Rehoboam. So, you can't just shift things. We have a secure anchor." Well, that's not really the case. [laughs] One of the Bimson articles in the protected folder will show you in excruciating detail why the military campaigns of Sheshonq do not align in fundamental ways with the invasion of Shishak described in the Bible. They are markedly different.

20:00

Just by way of a few examples in the biblical account, you've got Shishak and Jeroboam, the king of the North, who were allies. In the Egyptian account, Sheshonq attacks the Northern Kingdom and doesn't attack Jerusalem, but in the biblical account, Shishak attacks Jerusalem. These are just fundamental disconnections between the military campaign stories of Sheshonq in Egypt and Shishak in the Bible. People have sort of just assumed these are the same guys because their names are kind of similar, but when you actually look at the descriptions of what happened with Shishak's invasion and Sheshonq's invasion, they are just... I want to say "miles apart." Maybe that's an exaggeration, but there are significant differences that really just can't be reconciled.

And so if you don't have that synchronism (and that it's really the only "secure" one you have where the Bible overlaps with the Third Intermediate Period), then you can shift the Egyptian chronology all you want within the bounds of evidence, and this is what Rohl does. He shifts it, he compresses it, and that moves the timeline, which then, in turn, produces other synchronism that today Egyptologists and biblical scholars don't see there because they're still playing with the old timeline. So you have Egyptian texts that seemed to talk about the plagues. You have Egyptian texts seem to correlate with certain parts of the Exodus story. And nowadays people say that no, that we can't use that as evidence because it's 200 years too early or 200 years this or that, but if you compress the timeline then they line up. And so this is Rohl's argument, again.

This is a very broad brush stroke. If you want the nuts and bolts details, please subscribe to the newsletter. You can just read all that to your heart's content and just get lost in the vortex of ancient chronology. But my personal opinion is there really are problems on the Egyptian side with this, and I just don't know how you surmount the disconnections between the Sheshonq and Shishak problem. I mean, for Egyptologists, it's easy: "Well, the Bible's wrong. The Bible just got the details all screwed up." And for several biblical scholars, that's where they go, too. They have no qualms with trying to figure this out because they want the synchronism. They need the synchronism to sort of make the picture what it is, regardless of their confessional commitment (or lack thereof) to any sort of sense of inspiration and biblical historicity and coherence. For those of us... that's just not the first default position: "Well, the Bible screwed up." I don't think Rohl is a Christian or anything like that, but Rohl doesn't like arguments like that. And good for him because they're cheesy. They cheat. They take the easy path. And he's taking a real close look at Third Intermediate Period chronology, and I think he's right. I think there really are problems. The problems need fixing.

Now my disagreements with Rohl are going to be because Rohl "fixes" this problem, then he wants to try to fix ancient chronology problems everywhere. And not just the Near East, but like everywhere all over the Mediterranean, to have one coherent system, and he winds up pressing his case too far in a number of respects. And he says goofy things. He says some truly goofy things, and that's really unfortunate because it makes him an easy target. It becomes a convenient thing to say, "Well, look at this silly thing he said over there. I don't have any reason to listen to him when he talks about the Exodus chronology." That's just really unfortunate. Just because he might do something that's just sort of a little weird or a little wild or doesn't really work well in one area doesn't mean that he's wrong everywhere else, but that's kind of how the mainstream looks at Rohl. So it's unfortunate, but that's just the way it is.

**TS:** Nick wants to know:

23:50

**Is there still potential for us to sin in the new heaven/new Earth?**

25:00

**MH:** Well, I've said this before: since our glorification doesn't mean that we become God or become Jesus, then we can't say that we are clones 100% of them and possess with exhaustive completeness their perfect nature. So that still means we're lesser, even though we're glorified. So in theory (and this is the way I always put it: "in theory") that means well sure, we could have a hiccup. We could commit some flaw or some wrong or something like that. I'm only led to say that because we don't become Yahweh. There is only one uncreated Creator. I mean, we don't become him. We don't become Jesus, as though we are Jesus, but we do become as close—as like—Jesus as we can possibly get. So you can say that we still aren't God, and therefore we aren't ontologically 100% the same. We don't have 100% of God's nature and the nature of Jesus, so we're still lesser. And yes, that means that there's a possibility of rebellion. You can say



that, but possibilities are not probabilities in any really meaningful sense in this case.

Now, I would illustrate it this way. Like I've said on *Coast to Coast, A.M.* in a number of settings, it's possible that I could be the next American Idol, that I could be President, that I could win an Academy Award, that I could win a Nobel Prize. All those things are possible. But they ain't gonna happen, okay? They're just not going to happen. The possibility is so infinitesimal that it's basically meaningless. And that's what we've got going on here.

**TS:** Ken asked:

25:50

**If salvation in the Bible is strictly loyalty to Yahweh, are modern believers of Judaism with loyalty to Yahweh saved on not embracing Jesus as the Messiah?**

**MH:** No, they're not. To refuse Jesus is to reject Yahweh incarnate and to reject the plan of salvation that Yahweh came up with. So if you reject Jesus, you are rejecting the plan of Yahweh—the wisdom of Yahweh—and saying you got something better or you like the old plan, which (by the way) was in the works to begin with. But you don't get to make the rules. You don't get to prefer one thing over the other when Yahweh says, “This is my plan. This is the way of salvation.” You can't reject his plan and be saved. You don't get to swap something else in. If you could, that sort of makes all the preaching of the apostles meaningless and kind of dumb— really just pointless and hopelessly self-contradictory.

So no, this is what Yahweh decided. Yahweh came as a man in Jesus Christ, died on the cross, rose again, and ascended to the right hand of the Father and all that stuff that the New Testament (including, of course, the book of Hebrews) talks about. And if you think that you can just sort of trade that in for something else and say that you're still being loyal... “You know, Lord, I'm rejecting the plan that you've given me, but I'm still loyal to you.” That's just not coherent.

**TS:** Our next question is from “ashepbw:”

27:30

**In the “axe” podcast, Dr. Heiser said that idols were thought of as a house or dwelling place for those particular gods they were fashioned after. In Zechariah 11:17, it says, “Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock; the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arms shall be clean dried up and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.” What is this verse trying to say in regard to the idol shepherd? With my new understanding of what an idol is, it almost sounds like the idol shepherd will be indwelt by one of the Divine Council.**

**MH:** Yeah, the text really doesn't mean anything like that. There's a translation problem here. "Idol shepherd" is the King James translation, which is pretty awkward (and I would say pretty poor) in this instance. Now, I've looked at the New King James, and the New King James actually doesn't have what the regular King James has here. The New King James is like basically every other translation, and they'll translate the Hebrew word as "worthless" or something like that. So the word translated "idol" in in the question (in the reading of Zechariah 11:17 that was in the question) is reflected in the King James. That Hebrew word is *elil*, and that term can be used (and is used) elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible for something that is weak or feckless or defective or useless or vain or worthless. For example, Job 13:4. Let's just read that passage to give you one example. There are others.

**<sup>4</sup> As for you, you whitewash with lies;  
worthless physicians are you all.**

The word "worthless" there is *elil*. So again, it has this idea of uselessness. And think about the context of 13:4. It's not talking about idols that are masquerading as physicians or Divine Council members that are sort of possessing or inhabiting physicians. It's not talking about anything like that. It's about physicians who were useless in helping Job. They were worthless. They were defective. They couldn't help it. They were totally ineffectual.

30:00

And so that's what's going on in the Zechariah passage. A shepherd that deserts the flock is, by definition, useless because he's not doing the job of a shepherd. He's abandoning the job of the shepherd, so he is useless. I don't think this has anything to do with Divine Council.

**TS:** All right, Mike. There you go. That's all the questions we have for this week. So you did it.

**MH:** Well, what do you know? I actually got through a bunch in a reasonable amount of time. Put it on the calendar.

**TS:** Yeah, you got nothing left to talk about now, other than that we've got a live studio audience member here: Robert. Would you give him a shout out?

**MH:** That's right. Let's turn him loose. [laughs] Robert, you wanna meet your mic there?

**Robert:** Hey what's going on everybody?

**MH:** Okay. That's enough. [laughter] You're part of podcast history now. Where are you from Robert?

**Robert:** I'm from Little Rock, Arkansas—the only place mentioned, a modern city in the Bible.

**MH:** Oh, here we go...

**Robert:** “At the ark and saw.”

**MH:** Yep, okay we can edit that out. [laughter]

**TS:** All right, Mike. Well, that's it, then. I guess we want to thank Robert for coming in the studio. We need to start doing a live audience; that'd be fun.

**MH:** He snuck in.

**TS:** “He's in studio.” I like that. It just sounds good. I like saying that. Well that's really it, unless there's anything else you'd like to get off your chest.

**MH:** No, no. I think I think we're done.

**TS:** All right, sounds good. Well, we appreciate you answering our questions, as always, and I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.