

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 226

Colossians 1:1-13

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Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

We begin our study in the first chapter of Colossians with an eye toward some of Paul's more important vocabulary. Why does he refer to the Colossian believers as "holy ones" (1:2)? What sort of "knowledge" (1:9) is he talking about? What do the phrases "inheritance of the holy ones" and "domain of darkness" (1:12-13) mean in the context of Old Testament cosmic geography? Is the kingdom of God to which believers belong only future (1:13)?

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, episode 226: "Colossians 1:1-13". I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how're you?

MH: Pretty good. Busy as usual, but enjoying a little bit of the summer, too.

TS: Still hot here in Texas, but every day that goes by, Mike, it gets closer and closer to our conference, which... You can get the livestream, which *will* have a replay, so you don't really have to catch the livestream live. There *will* be a replay of it. So go sign up for the livestream at www.NakedBibleConference.com, and you can watch it at your own pace, at least for two weeks. And even the people who are attending will be able to have access to that livestream video and replay it at will for those two weeks, and then we'll have other stuff to announce. Till then... I hope you'll join us, at least for the livestream.

MH: Yeah, what can you say? If you want to see it in some sort of near space-time-continuum, get the livestream. [Laughs]

TS: Especially since it's...

MH: Who knows about later?

TS: Especially since it's the inaugural year! You don't want to miss the first one!

MH: Yeah.

TS: We want everybody to partake in it and be there for it. But we thank everybody that's purchased a ticket and signed up for the livestream. We look forward to doing it, and I hope everything technically works out! [Laughs]

MH: [Laughs] Right.

TS: I'm going to be a basket case that weekend, Mike, running around...

MH: You might see Trey cry! That might be better than the livestream. Or we could put that on the livestream!

TS: I'm going to reserve that till after the conference, when it's all over and said and done. I'm going to go curl up in a ball in a corner and just cry.

MH: What does Trey look like when he cries? [Laughs]

TS: Exactly.

MH: [Laughs] That's good. That's must-see TV right there!

TS: Yeah, that's going to be a separate livestream for that.

MH: Yeah.

TS: Alright, Mike, well, this episode starts our new book study in Colossians.

MH: Yep, finally jumping in. So we're in Colossians 1, obviously. And I'm going to go up through the first 13 verses. Next time we'll pick up with verse 13 again. Hopefully, I'll remember to tell you why I'm doing it that way when we get to the end here. Colossians 1:1-13... For those who may not have listened to other book studies, my method is pretty simple. I use ESV, but we drill down into it and do some Greek stuff (in this case) and I tend to just go through a passage and camp out on things that I think are interesting, that I think the audience might be interested in, or that just might generate a good question. So let's just jump into verse 1 here:

**Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
²To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father.**

I'm going to stop there. I should've included that I stop on things that are just hobby horse things for me. This is one of them. And I think for anyone who's listened to the podcast for a while, you would've suspected that I would stop at the word "saints." I have said before, I just hate this translation. Now, ESV... Everybody does it, but to translate *hagiois* (the holy ones) as "saints" just really irritates me. So this is yet another opportunity for me to vent about this translation. But I thought, hey, I've vented before about this, but why not drill down a little bit on it just so I can hopefully explain to people why I care—why this is such an irritation for me? That might be interesting.

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So "holy ones" (*hagiois*)... "To the holy ones and faithful brethren" (we'll just make it a plural) "in Christ at Colossae." If you actually do a search for "holy ones" in the Old Testament (the Hebrew lemma would be *qadosh*), and if you search for that lemma in the plural form, what do you find? Well, it's mostly used where you have a plural reference that are supernatural beings. It's twenty-some times. The exception is Daniel 8:24 (where you have *qadosh* used in the plural and it's not holy supernatural beings—it's humans). But most of the time, it's supernatural beings. It's actually really clear when the reference (*qadoshim*) is not used adjectively to describe something else. Sometimes it's used to describe God in the plural, because *elohim* is plural, then you have grammatical agreement. Other times, you have an honorific situation going on, where you have the holy one mentioned, then you have a plural of this, so it's just to magnify God. But other times, it's very clearly a set—a group—of supernatural beings. And that's important, to me anyway, because it's a reference point for Paul—for really anybody—who knows their Old Testament pretty well.

Now Paul's writing to the Colossians, and we said in our Colossians introduction that yeah, this is a Gentile location. There's going to be a lot of Gentiles here. But he has a problem with Judaizers, and then there's certain streams of Judaism that will be picked up and become what we later know as Gnosticism. So there's this mystical Judaism thing going on, and there's a lot of Jewish context here. Paul is going to have this floating around in his head and he's going to have a lot of his readers who, whether they're converted Jews or maybe he's giving them ammunition to confront Judaizers, whether he's trying to reach the Judaizing element... There's a lot of Jewish-ness about this epistle, and so I don't think it's out of step here to camp on this. "Holy ones," in the Old Testament, in a number of cases are supernatural holy beings. I'm going to drill down on two here. If you did this search (*qadosh* in the plural, Hebrew Bible), you're going to find Psalm 89:5 and Psalm 89:7. Those are the English numbers. In the Hebrew Bible, the numbering would be 89:6 and 89:8, but we're looking at English Bibles here, even though we're talking about Hebrew lemma. In Psalm 89:5, we have:

⁵ **Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!**

And then two verses later,

**⁷[God is] a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones,
and awesome above all who are around him?**

Now, if you look at that—if you drill down on those verses—in Psalm 89:5 (or 89:6 in Hebrew numbering), the word translated “assembly” is *qahal*. And that’s the interesting point here. This is what I wanted to reach in my drill-down here. There are roughly 116 instances of *qahal* in the Septuagint. In 70 of those, it’s *ekklēsia*. That’s the same word that’s going to be used throughout the New Testament for the Church. Now that’s not true of *śod* in Psalm 89:7—the council of the holy ones (“the *śod* and the holy ones”), but it is true of assembly of the holy ones (two verses earlier, just varying vocabulary). *Qahal* is a very familiar term that Septuagint translators render *ekklēsia*. Now the point is that this is very common terminology for the Church, and the Church is composed of believers, right? Believing human beings, humans that are in the family of God.

What this does, if people are familiar... Think about this. Paul is dealing with a lot of... There’s a lot of Jewish context going on here. But a lot of these people are reading the Septuagint. Even if they are Jewish (and certainly if they’re not), they’re going to be reading it in Greek. But when they see *hagiois* (and if they’ve been reading their Old Testament, in the Septuagint especially), they’re going to come across references to holy ones in the *ekklēsia* of God, in the heavens. In Psalm 89, the council is in the heavens. This creates a semantic and conceptual link between believers—humans—who are brought in to the family of God and whose destiny is glorification in the family of God, in the presence of God, forever because of Christ. He creates a conceptual, semantic link between them and the existing divine council. That is why “holy ones” terminology should just be left to say what it says. It creates this mental link (and it’s a theological link) back to this idea.

And this dovetails with the wider picture of biblical theology. You get into *theosis* here. Evangelicals would call that glorification, scholars would use terms like *theosis* or *deification*. We’ve talked about these things before. I’ve written about it in *Unseen Realm*. If you haven’t read *Unseen Realm* by this point, you really need to, because I don’t bother to repeat content in that book as we’re going through things on the podcast. But we’ve written about that, how the destiny of believers... We’re already partakers of the divine nature, but our destiny is glorification. It’s to be made like God. It’s to be made like Jesus. It’s to be made divine. We’re not going to become Yahwehs, individually, and then get our own planets and all that stuff. That isn’t the point. The point is we are made fit to occupy sacred space with God’s supernatural family that’s already there. And that was the intent in Eden. Eden is where God lives. Where God lives, his entourage is (his heavenly host, his bureaucracy, his spirit beings) because that’s where he’s going to run the show. That’s where he does business. Humans are

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brought into that environment for a specific purpose: to live with God. They are made to be fit for sacred space. They have to nullify themselves. They have to do something to nullify their membership. And they do. There's rebellion. But this is what God had in mind. He wanted a human family blended with his supernatural family, in his presence, copartners with him, to enjoy his created things—his created world—and to fellowship with him as intelligent beings, as his children. That's why he shares his attributes with us and not with the animal kingdom.

These are all big-picture theological things. And when you come across a term like *hagiois*—holy ones—and you translate it “saints” to a modern audience, that not only cuts them off from the Old Testament context, but it makes them think of modern things, like saints in Catholicism, or maybe the Eastern branch of Christianity, or whoever uses saint terminology. They're not thinking of their appointed destiny as members of the divine council, as part of the great cloud of witnesses (book of Hebrews). Earlier in the book of Hebrews, where we are presented in the congregation—in the council—we are presented to God and God is presented to us. This is Hebrews 2. This kind of translation just terminates that association. It cuts it off. It makes it un-see-able. And that's really my objection to a translation like “saints.”

Okay, I've hopped on that hobby horse again, but since it's here in Colossians, I feel justified. [laughs]

²To the holy ones and faithful [brethren]...

Faithful *adelphoi* is the term, actually, in Greek. Now, ESV has as its translation “faithful brothers in Christ,” and I don't want to rabbit trail too much on translation wars here, but ESV was created in part as a response to gender-neutral translation trends in the evangelical world, and so it will take *adelphoi* here and stick with the masculine in many instances. It doesn't always do this, but here it does: it goes with “brothers.” I would suggest to you that this verse and a number of other ones are one of the many instances where women should be contextually included in a term like *adelphoi*, which literally, if you're applying a gloss to it, means “brothers.” We're familiar with “Philadelphia”—the city of brotherly love (*adelphos*=brother). It's what you see when you look it up in the lexicon. Well, there are a number of cases where that just really isn't good. It's not adequate. Women should be included.

So just a few examples... This is really easy to demonstrate. Let's go to Romans 1:13. Paul's writing:

¹³I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you...

What, he doesn't want the *men* in the church to be ignorant of this, but it's fine if the women are ignorant of it? The women don't need to know that he really wanted to visit them? That just doesn't make sense. Romans 7:4:

⁴ Likewise, my brothers [*adelphoi*], you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

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The women don't need to do that? Just the men? It's only the men who've died to the Law through the body of Christ that they may bear fruit for God? It's obvious that women are included in this. I could just go on and on and on and on with these kinds of examples. I'm not going to belabor the point, but I think it's worth bringing up. Do not be misled, either by English translations, or by the rhetoric that goes with this, that it's always inappropriate to have a gender-neutral translation. If I were doing this, I'd say, "...to the holy ones and faithful men and women in Christ at Colossae," because hey, there's faithful women there, too. [Laughs] And elsewhere, Paul uses the very same term to obviously include women in what he's talking about. It's just transparently obvious. So I don't really know why (because ESV doesn't do this kind of thing consistently)... I don't know why it just sticks with "brothers" here. I'm sure somebody could tell me there's some reason, but that doesn't mean it's a good one. I just think this is worth bringing up here, so don't be misled into thinking that a gender-neutral translation of a word like *adelphoi* is always evil and sinister and has some agenda attached to it. It doesn't. It just makes sense in context. Sometimes you can say those sorts of things that different publishing houses, different scholars, want to translate a term a certain way to de-masculate some point of a passage. That happens, too, but let's not assume that's always the case, because it isn't. We're just talking about context here.

So let's continue in verse 3 [Colossians 1]. Paul writes:

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints.

Ugh, there it is again. "All the holy ones."

⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

I'm going to stop there at the end of verse 10 to make a few observations here. Not to be silly, but I probably ought to say something about verse 9, "from the day we heard this, we have not ceased to pray for you." That doesn't mean that's all they were doing, like you pray 24/7 or something like that. When you see language about prayer of this type—in this mode—they're just talking about something that is regular. It's very regular. Not that it consumes the entirety of their time, as if it's the only activity that they do and they're not doing anything else. Obviously, they're doing lots of other things in ministry and personally. I think that ought to be very obvious, but to some it's not. Some judge themselves unnecessarily in this regard. "Pray without ceasing," "not cease to pray for you"... It means you should always be doing it. In terms of "this is going to be part of your day all the time, moment by moment, throughout the day," that sort of thing. It's not something that squeezes everything else out.

Now, we have several terms here: *knowledge* of his will, *spiritual wisdom*, and *understanding*. And then in verse 10, we have a reference to the knowledge of God once again. Now, we said in our introduction (we of necessity had to comment on), what is the relationship of some of the things that Paul is going to talk about to Gnosticism? Gnosticism is derivative from the term *gnosis*, which means knowledge. And so some (drawing from our introduction here so if you haven't listened to that, you need to go back and listen to it) scholars and other readers have just assumed that when Paul mentions knowledge, he must be talking about Gnosticism, because he's using a *gnosis* word. Actually, the word here isn't *gnosis*, it's *epignosis*, which is obviously related, but it's not quite the same term. But if you remember our introduction, we said that full-blown Gnosticism is later than Paul's era. And even Gnostic texts—the Nag Hammadi texts—don't even refer to themselves as Gnostics. They use other terms. That's something that comes along later, because we have systematized schools of thought within what we would call the Gnostic community. But even they don't really use that term for themselves. So we have to be careful about what we're doing here. Based on the information we shared last time in the introduction, I do not see Paul addressing Gnosticism in Colossians. He *will* address streams that will flow into what becomes known as Gnosticism, for sure, but full-blown Gnosticism is not in existence when Paul is writing this letter to the Colossians.

So let's talk about the "knowledge" terminology here. Some have picked up on *epignosis* and have seen a hint that Paul is picking up the language, and by implication refuting Gnostic opponents—specific religious groups and whatnot. N.T. Wright comments on this in his Tyndale commentary on Colossians. He says:

Some have seen in the word ‘knowledge’ (*epignōsis*) a hint that Paul is picking up the language (and, by implication, refuting the teaching) of ‘gnostic’ opponents—religious groups which, drawing on many traditions, held out the offer of a salvation attained through spiritual ‘knowledge’ (*gnōsis*), which would enable one to escape from the material world and realize one’s true (‘spiritual’) destiny. There is, however, no evidence of such teaching in any clearly defined form at this period, and when it does appear it is probably itself dependent on Christianity.

What Paul is speaking of here is not an esoteric knowledge, confined to private religious experience or exclusive sects. It is a knowledge ‘of his (i.e. God’s) will’, which is open to all God’s people.

That’s the end of the NT Wright quote from his Tyndale commentary. That’s basically what we said in our introduction, as far as the historical context here. We need to remember that, and I think Wright’s point here is generally well-taken, but really, all you need to do is look at verse 10. In verse 10, the knowledge is defined. Let’s go back up to verse 10:

¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

It’s not an inner knowledge, it’s not an inner awakening, it’s not self-realization. These are all going to become Gnostic themes and threads. It’s not. It’s the knowledge of God. Spiritual wisdom and understanding could just as well be rendered... This is interesting, grammatically now: the phrase “spiritual wisdom and understanding”... You could just render that opposite, like “spiritual understanding and wisdom.” The grammar can support either. I mention that because it would be wrong to say that one of these (wisdom or understanding), that one of the nouns is more spiritual than the other. It’s not. The grammar doesn’t allow you to say that. Dunn, in his *New International Greek Testament Commentary* on this epistle, adds this thought about this “spiritual wisdom and understanding” or “spiritual understanding and wisdom,” or however we’re going to render that. He says:

The more immediate background for the thought here is again, doubtless, Jewish, since the combination of [these two nouns] “wisdom and understanding” is a repeated feature of Jewish writings.

Now, if you have his commentary, he gives you a whole grocery list of passages where these two nouns are combined in text from the Hebrew Bible—Exodus 31:3, 35:31, Deuteronomy 4:6, Job 8:10, 12:13—he has a whole slew of them—Psalm 49:3, 111:10, so on and so forth. He also includes Second Temple literature, so the book of Wisdom, the book of Judith, Ben Sirach, the Epistle of

Baruch, the Testament of Zebulun. This is a very common way for Jewish writers to talk about the knowledge of God—the God of Israel, the God of Judaism, the God of the Hebrew Bible. I’m belaboring this a little bit to get away from the notion that this has anything to do with inner knowledge, inner enlightenment—again, these classic Gnostic themes. Because you don’t really have full-blown Gnosticism here to deal with. That’s just not the point. Now, Dunn goes on to comment. He says:

Here, too, the wisdom in particular is understood as given through the law (Deut. 4:6; 1 Chron. 22:12; Sir. 24:23–26; Bar. 3:36–4:1), but it is equally recognized that such wisdom can come only from above.

In other words, the source of the wisdom is the true God, the God of the Bible, the God of Israel, because this is a very common way of expressing knowledge and wisdom that the God of Israel gives to his people.

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And particularly to be noted is the recognition that wisdom and understanding come only from the Spirit (Exod. 31:3; 35:31; Isa. 11:2; [and on into Second Temple Lit.] Wis. 9:17–19; Sir. 39:6; Philo, *De gigantibus* 22–27; 4 Ezra 14:22, 39–40).

He’s got a whole grocery list of places where this is true. So this is the wider Jewish community. If you were a Jew or a Judaizer, or if you had just pretty good exposure to the scriptures of the Jew through the Septuagint, if you’re living at Colossae and you hear this, you know what Paul’s talking about. He’s not talking about some esoteric, mystical experience—some sort of naval-gazing looking within. That’s not what he’s referring to at all, and everybody would know it. It’s only modern people who want to see Paul as either promoting some Gnosticism of his own, or they want to see Paul rejecting Gnosticism so they can turn around and call Paul evil. “It’s because of Paul that we don’t have all these extra books in the Bible, like the Gospel of Mary and Philip, and all these other Gnostic texts.” All that nonsense. You basically have to ignore the Judaizing or Jewish context to all of this terminology. So Dunn is saying, “that just wouldn’t be a good idea, because there’s a heap-big pile of it.” Back to Dunn, he says:

Whether there is an implied rebuke of an alternatively conceived or false wisdom is less clear since in that case we might have expected more emphasis on the point (as in 1 Corinthians 1–2); but the allusion in 2:23 does indicate that a claim to wisdom was part of the teaching in Colossae that called forth the response of this letter.

Colossians 2:23 says (Paul is addressing the false teachers):

²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

So Paul is actually pitting the spiritual wisdom, spiritual understanding, and the knowledge of God over against those guys. Paul is clearly drawing on the Old Testament as his context. That is his point of orientation for the knowledge of God, not whatever these other fellows are saying. So I think Dunn's commentary there is pretty helpful. Let's go back to verse 9:

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the [holy ones] in light.¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son...

That's the end of verse 13. That's really where we're going to stop for this episode, but let me just read you that again, because I'm going to ask you about the vocabulary. Look at the terms: inheritance, holy ones, domain of darkness, kingdom of his beloved son. If you've read *Unseen Realm*, [laughs] this should just be setting lights off in your head, just from the get-go.

¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the [holy ones] in light.¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son...

Inheritance. The Greek word is *klēros* there. Now if you read your standard commentary, they're going to talk about, "*Klēros* is used with land, because the land was the inheritance. The promised land—land, land, land, land, land..." Yeah. That's only half the story. Who (as in people) were God's inheritance in the Old Testament? Let's try to divorce our mind just a moment from land. Are there people in the Old Testament that God speaks of as his inheritance? I wish I had the Final Jeopardy music—I would cue it right here. Does it ring any bells? If you've read *Unseen Realm*, you should be screaming, "Deuteronomy 32:9!" The Deuteronomy 32 Worldview. Deuteronomy 32:8-9:

**⁸ When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
when he divided mankind,**

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**he fixed the borders of the peoples
according to the number of the sons of God.**

**⁹ But the LORD's portion is his people,
Jacob his allotted heritage.**

When the Most High divided the nations, he divided them up according to the sons of God, but *Israel* is Yahweh's *nahalah*—his inheritance, his portion. Israel is his *nahalah*—his inheritance. That's Deuteronomy 32:9. That term in the Hebrew Bible (*nahalah*) is used 222 times. 211 of those in the Septuagint are rendered *klēros*. This is a very clear path, not just back to turf, to dirt... And again, the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview obviously includes the concept of holy ground. We get that. But *klēros* also refers to a people. And if you're looking at it that way... You go back to what Paul actually said here and if you're thinking about people:

**¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified *you* to share in the inheritance
of the [holy ones]...**

You believers at Colossae are made fit to share—to have a place—in God's people! Now to a Gentile, that's obviously a big deal. To a Jew, it's a big deal, too, because they weren't really thinking about the Gentiles being included here. Paul refers to the gospel as the “mystery” because of that reason, that the Gentiles be made full heirs—full children of Abraham—like he puts it in Galatians 3:26-29. But again, if you come across the word “inheritance” of the holy ones, and you're thinking, “Holy ones... Hey, back in the Old Testament, there are a number of places where that was God's supernatural family.” Yeah, yeah, that's true. Again, what we're doing here is dot-connecting. And what I'm suggesting to you is that sometimes your English translation makes it hard for you to connect dots. It's unfortunate, but it's just the reality.

So this is what... I hate to keep referencing *Unseen Realm* here, but I'm going to do it because it's the best reference point I have. What I was trying to do in *Unseen Realm* was connect dots for you. Just show you the lay of the land, connect the dots, give you the network of ideas (the mosaic) here so that you can drill down wherever you like. But once you see the connections, you can't un-see them. And that's really what we're shooting for here. When Paul is talking about people as an inheritance with the holy ones... and we know elsewhere that Paul is very tuned in to what we call the Deuteronomy 32 worldview. It's kind of obvious how he looks at the Colossians. The Colossians are full heirs. They are full members in the family of God, and that family of God—the human family of God—has the inheritance of the holy ones. They will one day judge angels, like he says in I Corinthians 6. They will one day rule the nations with the Lord. Because the Lord—the Messiah—is their brother. That's why Jesus can have us share his throne. That's why Jesus can hand us the rod and say, “I know the

Messiah's supposed to rule the nations with a rod of iron. Here, you can help. You're a partner." It's because we are grafted into a supernatural family. And our glorification (our deification, our *theosis*, whatever term you want to use)—that's your destiny. And Paul's language here, drawn from the Septuagint (which will take you back into some of these passages), is important. It shouldn't be obscured by translation. This is a really good place to illustrate how this helps.

Now, if I can condense this and summarize it, the point is that at salvation we share in the inheritance of the holy ones. On Earth, that means we (we'll just speak as Gentiles here) are part of the earthly people of God just like Israel was. But the bigger picture is that we're members of this heavenly family as well, which includes these supernatural beings. Now, the idea of a remnant community of holy ones on Earth here that correspond to heavenly holy ones... Believe it or not, that idea... I'll say it again: the idea of a remnant community of holy ones on Earth that correspond to the holy ones in the heavens—in the council—that is part of Second Temple Jewish theology, especially at Qumran.

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I don't have time to read through all the passages and do that kind of thing, but if you are a newsletter subscriber... Here we go again. Please subscribe to the newsletter. If you want content that you can't find on the internet (this is what we're about) please subscribe to the newsletter. There's a link at the bottom of every issue, and I have put in the folder this article: Paul B. Decock, "Holy Ones, Sons of God, and the Transcendent Future of the Righteous in 1 Enoch and the New Testament." Now, if that doesn't make you salivate for content, then I don't know what's... [laughs] "Holy Ones, Sons of God, and the Transcendent Future of the Righteous in 1 Enoch and the New Testament." It's from the peer-reviewed journal, *Neotestamentica*. It's a 1983 article. It's 12 pages. It's going to be somewhat technical, but it's good stuff. There are a number of articles I could cite and put in there, but I thought this would be a good one, a good starter point to make the point that the idea of a remnant community (faithful believers, faithful brethren, which includes men and women)... The idea of a remnant community of holy ones on Earth here that correspond to heavenly holy ones is part of Second Temple Jewish theology. It just is. Especially at Qumran. This article is going to give you a focus on Enoch. But it's just good stuff. It just helps you, if you have this in your head and you're aware of this kind of conceptual connection. When you read what Paul's saying here in the first chapter of Colossians, it's like, "I know where he's going with this." But it's obscured by your lack of access to this kind of material, and it's obscured, in this case unfortunately, by translation. "Saints." Ugh. Okay, I'm going to try to move on now. [laughs] Back to verse 13.

¹³ **He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son...**

Now, let's talk about some verbs here. Delivered (*ῥύομαι*—*rhyomai*) gets translated “rescued,” which is kind of interesting. God has *rescued* us from the domain of darkness. I kind of like that. I like the semantic feel. I mean, “delivered” is really the same, but “rescue” kind of captures the picture a little bit more that we were *lost* and we have to be rescued. It's not that “we're just in a pickle here. Boy, if we had enough time, we could get out of this.” No, we *have* to be rescued. Exodus uses this verb (*rhyomai* is the lemma) several times to describe the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, which is ultimately a victory over the gods of Egypt. “This night I will judge the gods of Egypt. This night I will have victory over the gods of Egypt.”

Tense-wise, this verb for “delivered”... He has rescued us and transferred us. Both of those verbs are going to be in the same tense in Greek. They're going to be both aorist. Think about what Paul is saying here.

¹³ **He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son...**

So aorist, in terms of Greek grammar, conveys the notion of a snapshot of action. In other words, it views an action as a completed event. It's not an action in process, it's an action that is a completed event. Not in process, but already completed. It's whole. Action as a whole, not in process, or in the process of becoming something different. It is what it is, and it's complete. Now, if you're looking at that, this is a classic “already, but not yet” kind of thing. We've already been rescued from the domain of darkness and we've already been transferred to the kingdom. That's what the verse says. If you're thinking that kingdom references in the New Testament are only about a millennial kingdom, get used to disappointment. That's not true. Now, some of them, I would say, yeah, you can have that discussion. You can make that point. But there are others that are clearly indicating that the kingdom is already. We're back to this “already-but-not-yet.” As far as the “not yet,” there are passages... The same writer (Paul) writes other things. He says in I Corinthians 15:24:

²⁴ **Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.**

Well, if the kingdom's already, what's this talk about delivering the kingdom? That's something yet in the future. He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and every power. After destroying them. Right now, the authority of the rulers and powers has been nullified. They have no authority over the Gentile. The Gentile is not only *allowed* to come back to the true God (the Most High, who had divorced them, who had forsaken them back at the Babel event), but God *wants* them to come back. God *insists* on it. So we've got this futuristic aspect of the judgment of Psalm 82 over the gods of the nations (“they will die like men”) which hasn't happened yet. We've had a whole

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episode on this about the judgment of the gods—the death of the gods—with David Burnett. If you're a podcast listener, you should be familiar with that. Let's go to 2 Timothy 4:1. Paul writes to Timothy:

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom...

There's a connection there between kingdom and judging the living and the dead. It hasn't happened yet. The book of Revelation is going to go on to describe that and set it in futuristic terms. And I should say at this point that I know we have preterists in the audience, but what we have to realize is that, in terms of eschatology, when we see New Testament writers talk about Day of the Lord things, we have to realize that Day of the Lord things are connected. You can't chop one off and look at the others. What happens at the Day of the Lord? The righteous are all vindicated, the wicked are all judged, you have a general resurrection, you have a remaking of heaven and Earth. As we talked about a few weeks ago, at the return Jesus the antichrist is killed off. You have things like this that are associated with... The one term you could put on it is "finality." Evil is finally dealt with. The resurrection—the full resurrection, becoming as the stars (Daniel's talk of the Day of the Lord)—that happens in its fullness. The righteous are vindicated *fully*. None of these things are in process anymore when the Day of the Lord comes. And that, in my judgment, is the real weakness of preterism. I think other systems have weaknesses that we've talked about here on the podcast as well. That's why I don't buy into systems. They're all beautiful, except where they're not. This is one of the great weaknesses.

When the Day of the Lord happens, these things are no longer in process. They're done. And we live in a world today that I think it's a fairly easy assessment to say that, "Eh, this stuff isn't done yet." That seems obvious to me, and I think it would be obvious to any of the New Testament writers. But I figured that was worth a bit of a rabbit trail. This is Day of the Lord language. We have "already, but not yet." Here in Colossians 1, it's the "already," and in some of these other verses, it's the "not yet." It's the thing that's going to come to produce this finality, where things are no longer in process. And what's really interesting is the language here—the verbs... Paul looks at the present state of things (the "already," since he does use the aorist—the snapshot action), but then we have these other statements about the kingdom with the Day of the Lord stuff. The New Testament writers are using Old Testament language and quoting Old Testament passages that haven't happened yet.

And if we went through the New Testament, some of them are going to be aorists, too, in other tenses, like perfects. Why is it both? How can you have snapshot action of both the "already" and "not yet"? How can you do that? Because in the mind of the writer, and in the mind of God (because let's not leave the Holy Spirit out of producing the text here) each of those things is just as

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real as the other. Even though, from our perspective, we're embodied beings, we're going through the course of time, we're living life, we're waiting, we're hoping—all this kind of talk in the New Testament. These things are going to be accomplished. There's a finality for them already in the mind of God. They are destined events because of the work of Christ. If you didn't have that, then you might get some other ways of describing them, but in the wake of Christ, who is at the right hand of God, he's ruling and reigning. If he's at the right of God, he's reigning over something. The kingdom's already here in some sense. We're still doing things like the fullness of the Gentiles, we still have to do evangelism, all this kind of stuff. But the kingdom is a present reality. It was established. There's your snapshot. It's a beachhead, to use a World War II analogy. Normandy happened. There it is. And without it, the war's not won. With it, the war is basically won. We can say that in hindsight, and of course people were doing the planning... Even the enemies thought that "if the Allies ever do this, we're done, we're toast." That's not hard to find. I read lots of books on World War II, so that's why I'm going there. It's an established reality.

There's God's established reality, and in terms of the participants, well, there's a lot of work to do here. But the way the planner—the chief architect here, the God who came up with this plan with Jesus to not only undo the effects of the Fall, he sends the Spirit to inhibit depravity and deal with depravity, and then he allows the nations or solicits the nations or legitimizes the nations to come back into the fold... The God who's thinking about all those things, they're all centered on Jesus: the events of the Cross, the resurrection, and the ascension. Those things have happened now, so they are, in fact, here and in place. The "already" is just as real as the "not yet," and the "not yet"... Here is the more important point: the "not yet" will be just as real as the "already." That's why you have the writers use the same kind of tenses for both sides of this coin. It telegraphs something. The thing you're hoping for, the thing you're waiting for, is going to be just as real. And it is, in the mind of God, as real as this—as the present. So we kind of miss the flavorings of these sorts of things, but they're important.

One more thought here, before we end for the episode: "domain of darkness." Hmm, let's put our thinking caps back on. What might that be? "We're rescued from the domain of darkness." Well, what was the domain of darkness in Old Testament cosmic geography? The hint is, it's the opposite of the kingdom of his beloved son, okay? [laughs] I mean, in Old Testament cosmic geography, the domain of darkness is everything outside—everything other than the domain of Yahweh. Now, in the Exodus conquest, remember *rhyomai*? I said that Exodus uses this a few times for what happened—delivering Israel out of Egypt. If you think about the Exodus context, if that is intentional (and it may be because *rhyomai* is not that common of a word)... But it's interesting because if that's the case, then the more immediate context in cosmic geography—the domain of darkness—is the kingdom of Azazel. Do you remember, they have to pass through the desert wilderness on their way? They've left Egypt, they've camped at Sinai, they leave Sinai, and now they've got to go to the Promised Land. And

part of this the Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) ceremony, where you get Azazel mentioned. But there's this consciousness—this idea—that everywhere outside the camp... We're not in the Promised Land yet so we can't attach holy cosmic geographical significance to the land yet, because the land is still under the dominion of our enemies. And specifically, the descendants of the Nephilim are a big factor here, and that takes us all the way back to the chaos with Babylon and all that. All that stuff's going on here, but we're not in the land yet, so it's not the land that is sanctified—is holy. The land hasn't become Yahweh's inheritance yet in real time, but we are. We have become Yahweh's inheritance in real time. We are Israel. The presence of Yahweh is with us, and so we're mobile, we go through the desert. Everywhere outside of the camp is the domain of darkness. And that domain is the domain of Azazel, in Leviticus.

Now Azazel, of course, becomes a Satan figure in the Second Temple literature and in the New Testament, as well. Now, there's a number of ways to talk about this. I don't want to spoil too much of this because we're going to get into this somewhat in our interview with Archie Wright (he'll be a speaker at the conference, as well). I will say this, though: there's what I believe is a poor way of framing the discussion. Where do we get in the Old Testament some of these ideas about Satan? Well, all of the data points... This is my view, this is nobody else's view. (Well, I shouldn't say nobody else's view; it's the view of other people, but we're talking about me right now.) I would characterize it this way: yes, there's a development in the idea of Satan and his domain and his relationship to the fallen sons of God, and the sons of God that rule the nations who are in rebellion— all that stuff. That develops over time. But there's nothing in what the New Testament says (and I would add, there's nothing in what the Second Temple says)... Second temple and New Testament connect a lot of dots here that the Old Testament doesn't connect, but the dots are all found in the Old Testament. There's nothing foreign.

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Now that is a somewhat controversial view, but I think I can defend it pretty well. When my book on *Demons: The Powers of Darkness* comes out (I don't know when that will be, sometime in 2019) that's what you're going to read in that book. But for now, the domain of darkness... If you're putting it in its Old Testament context, you've got a connection with Azazel, cosmic geography, and all that. It makes sense to connect those dots in the New Testament. They've already been connected in the Second Temple period. But even though the Old Testament isn't the place where they're connected, they're all there. That's another way of saying Second Temple Jewish demonology and Second Temple Jewish satanology are consistent with Old Testament demonology and Old Testament satanology. Instead of demonology, I should probably say Old Testament theology of the powers of darkness or evil spirits. The Testaments are consistent and so is Second Temple thinking here. Because all that they're doing is they're looking at their Old Testament, whether you're a Second Temple Jewish writer or a New Testament writer and you're looking *back* at your Old Testament. In the New Testament writer's case, he's also looking at the Second

Temple literature, because that now exists. But they're looking back on the Hebrew Bible, because that's their point of orientation for sacred scripture. And they're seeing dots, and they're connecting them. They're drawing conclusions about the dots they see. That's all they're doing. So they're not just making stuff up: "Oh, I wish we had a full-blown doctrine of this. I can't find any of this in the Old Testament, so let's just make it up." That's the way overly zealous critics look at things, and they overstate the data. It's a problem.

So anyway, I didn't want to rabbit-trail too much on that. But here in Colossians 1, to wrap up, you've got certain features already that show you Paul's awareness of cosmic geography. As we read through the epistle, I think it's good to point out that Paul has a grasp of these things that we think are important from Old Testament theology that maybe if you're reading an English Bible aren't quite as apparent. But if you can penetrate the translation a little bit, you're going to see the consistency of thought between the New Testament back to the Old Testament. And that's your Bible lesson kind of stuff. When it comes to just what we get out of Colossians 1 for ourselves, I think the "already, but not yet" is a big deal, and the fact that we share an inheritance with the holy ones. These are all important points. I think they help us think about ourselves in a theologically astute way. Not only that, but this stuff ought to have an impact on your sense of identity (and ultimately your sense of mission) as we keep Colossians in context—that Paul is giving this message in a Gentile place where there's plenty of Gentiles there, and there are Jews listening. Some of them get it, and some of them don't want to hear it. That's just important to grasp as we look at the epistle.

TS: Mike, is there any way we can get a sneak peak of next week, what you'll be covering for the rest of chapter 1?

MH: Oh, yeah, in verse 14... We're going to start in Colossians 1:13 and go down through about verse 20, and there are just so many things here. Redemption ("in Christ, we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins"). Ronn Johnson has, I think, done six parts of a series now on the blog talking about some of the weaknesses of substitution in penal terminology and asking the question, "How do we draw the right theological conclusions and use the right vocabulary and not use poor vocabulary?" So we're going to get into some of that. I've already posted a few thoughts on the blog about that, and I'll probably do a little bit more of that before the episode. But we'll hit that. You get all this talk from verse 15 on how Christ is the image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation. That's always controversial—the firstborn language. If Jesus is uncreated, why do we get this language? All that sort of thing. There's just a lot of stuff in here, so I hope we can get up through verse 20.

TS: Alright, sounds good, looking forward to it! Real quick, Mike, I just want to remind everybody to go get your livestream tickets for the Naked Bible Conference, August 18, if you haven't done so. We appreciate everybody that has so far. I know everybody else is looking forward to the book of Colossians as

we move forward. I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.