

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript
Episode 243
ETS Conference Interviews, Part 2
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Dr. Gerry Breshears (GB)
Dr. Mark Futato (MF)

Episode Summary

This episode features conversations with Dr. David Capes of Wheaton, Dr. Gerry Breshears of Western Seminary, and Dr. Mark Futato of Reformed Theological Seminary. We talk about a new book for the non-specialist on early high Christology / Jewish binitarianism; uses of, and responses to, Mike's book, *The Unseen Realm*; Hebrew, and a forthcoming book on Hebrew accents and their exegetical importance.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 243: ETS Interviews, Part 2. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, another day!

MH: It's been busy... kinda hectic.

TS: It has! It's always fun to try to find where to set up to record these. We've added video this year, so hopefully that turns out well. But we've commandeered several chairs at a table. Mike and I stole a table from a ballroom. Don't tell anybody!

MH: Yep. Well, we file that under "it's easier to get forgiveness than permission." That's just kind of how we roll.

TS: Absolutely. Well, who have we got for this episode?

MH: This episode we have David Capes, who is an expert in New Testament and Second Temple Judaism. David was sort of an early member of what the academic community would call "Early High Christology" or "Early Jewish Binitarian Christology." Those of you who have read *Unseen Realm*, of course, know that what all that means is the idea of Jesus as God has a history that is

deeply rooted textually and historically. David was part of that way back in the 90's. He's still part of that. He has a new book out that's really aimed at the non-specialist. So when I saw that, I thought this is going to be an ideal person to have an interview with. And then along with David, we have Gary Breshears. Gary is going to be familiar to the audience. He was on the promotional video for *Unseen Realm*. He's been a friend for a long time. He's connected to the Bible Project. He's really sort of helped me make some connections in the wider evangelical world. Gary is a Systematic Theologian up in the Pacific Northwest region where I'm at now. He and I have a fairly long history, so I thought it would be fun to have him on the podcast and talk about what he actually does. After him, we have Mark Futato. His name will be familiar to some who have taken a Memra course in Hebrew. We use his grammar. Mark is going to spend some time with us and talk about Hebrew—no surprise there—and some things he's been working on. I should tell the audience that Mark has been a really enthusiastic adopter (fan) of the book *Unseen Realm*. Unlike Gary, that I had this history with, Mark comes along and has really appreciated the work. We're not going to talk about that; we're going to talk about what he does. That's the whole purpose of what we're doing here.

MH: Hi everybody! We're back at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society here in Denver. With us now is Dr. David Capes. If you are a close reader of *Unseen Realm*, that name will be familiar because he's in the footnotes to the book. David is one of the leading scholars in Early High Christology. I'm going to ask him to introduce himself (basically where he teaches, what he teaches, degrees, however you want to introduce yourself). Then for the sake of the audience who might not be as up to speed, tell us what Early High Christology is.

DC: Okay, thanks. Thanks so much. I'm David Capes. I teach at Wheaton College. I'm the Dean of the Biblical-Theological Studies program at Wheaton College, which includes undergraduate and graduate studies. The book that we're talking about is called *The Divine Christ: Paul, the Lord Jesus, and the Scriptures of Israel*. I've been at Wheaton College a couple of years. Before that, 25 years teaching at Houston Baptist University. One of the people involved in the Early High Christology Club... There's actually a group of us who are scholars that have written books or articles arguing that from the very earliest moment in history that we have (which is the writing of the Apostle Paul) that there are expressions of a high Christology or a divine Christology in those texts. The worship of Jesus is described. There are particular titles associated with Jesus, particular actions associated with Jesus that could only really be understood if early Christians like Paul (who were Jews) understood Jesus to be divine—one with God.

5:00

MH: I imagine there is some diversity within the club, but they would understand Paul as expressing the idea that Jesus was Yahweh incarnate—somehow attaching him to Yahweh?

DC: Yeah, Jesus as the embodiment of God. One of the things I do in this particular book is take a look at those fourteen or fifteen places in Paul where he's quoting or alluding to an Old Testament text that is associated with the Divine Name. Now, you've got to know that the Divine Name is understood to have unbelievable reverence at this particular time. It wasn't to be spoken, it wasn't to be written lightly. Even when you were reading the scripture in the synagogue, when you came to the four letters (the *yod*, the *he*, the *vav*, the *he*) of the Divine Name, you were to substitute a word. In the provinces where Greek was spoken, they would substitute the word *kurios*, and that becomes the word associated particularly with Jesus. Over 200 times in the New Testament, Paul refers to Jesus as the *kurios*.

MH: *Kurios* means "lord," so when you read "lord" in your English Bible in these quotations, this is what's happening.

DC: In the Old Testament, a lot times when you look through and you see the word "Lord" it's spelled the same way (l-o-r-d), but you might have uppercase letters or lowercase. That's to signal to the reader that when it's all uppercase, we have an expression of the Divine Name. I don't know how early that goes back—probably the 11th or 12th Century, where the word "Lord" was substituted for the Divine Name. Now in the old King James Bible, about six or seven times they use the word "Jehovah." But that's actually sort of a composite word, not really the divine name.

MH: This is important subject matter because there's this notion out in the wacky world of the internet (which I affectionately refer to as "Middle Earth") that High Christology—the notion of the deity of Christ (Yahweh is incarnate and the Trinitarian stuff that goes with it)—is a contrivance and comes much later than the New Testament period. So your work and the work of others is seriously a good rebuttal to that kind of thing. If you're going to go off and call this a contrivance, there are a lot of data here that you're not dealing with.

DC: There's a ton of information, yeah. I don't know that we've won the day completely. There are still a few scholars out there who say it develops over time. We call that the "Late, Low, and Slow Club." We're the Early High Christology Club, then there's the Late, Low, and Slow Club. People like Jimmy Dunn, for example, who makes the case in his book that it's probably not until you get to the Gospel of John that you have a full-orbed divine Christology. We think the evidence actually points to the fact that Paul (our earliest theologian) and even the traditions that he cites—the hymn bits that he cites as part of what some call "pre-formed tradition"... It's even present there. Which takes us back within

maybe a decade or two of the execution of Jesus. So this happens very, very early.

MH: Yeah. Do you connect it at all, either in this book or some other book, with the Memra traditions? That would be another trajectory to follow to sort of make the same point.

DC: I haven't done that in this particular book. I'm trying to think if I know of anybody who's doing that.

MH: Daniel Boyarin has done a good bit of recent work on the Two Powers, building off what Segal...

DC: That's right! Well, Alan Segal, who was a Jewish New Testament scholar was a mud-carrying member of our Early High Christology Club. He was there when it was founded. It was actually founded back in Chicago back in 1995 or 1996 at the SBL meeting. There's an interesting story about it that would probably take as long as we have left.

MH: Is there a unique contribution in this book compared to some other things? Feel free to mention your other books. Is there something unique about this book that isn't in the other ones, or is this a distillation, or how would you characterize it?

DC: This is actually... I did a book a number of years ago published in the [German series] and Martin Hengel was the one who helped to get that published. Essentially, it was called Old Testament Yahweh Text in Paul's Christology. That was sort of more of an academic version of this, but since then what I've done is actually engaged other scholars who've written on the topic and tried to bring the book up to date. But I have looked at these expressions of what I call "Yahweh Texts," where the Divine Name is now translated or rendered as *kurios* and now applied to Jesus. It's not every time. There are a number of times that it refers to God the Father, demonstrating that it's not just something that Paul does.

MH: But the fact that he would do it to both...

10:00

DC: The fact that he does it in both places (to both figures) becomes very significant for me. So I make that argument there, and I also take up some things that Chris Tilling has written about in his book, *Paul's Divine Christology*. I think he makes a wonderful case that the language that is associate with the relationship of Yahweh to Israel is now sort of taken over by Paul to say, "This is the right way to speak about the relation between the Lord Jesus and his church—his people." An interesting relational...

MH: That's an interesting roundabout way (for lack of a better term)... you make the same point.

DC: I think a number of us are making the same point. Larry Hurtado is a good friend of mine who teaches at the University of Edinburgh, and he's made the case that from very early on, we see Jesus being an object of worship among early Christians. He calls it "Christ devotion." That's his term. He's written about that in the book *The Lord Jesus Christ*, among other places, that when you look at the behavior—the disposition—it wasn't just what people believed. Religion was about what people did and how were their bodies and how was their disposition toward Jesus? It really can only be described as one of worship.

MH: Larry and I... I don't spend a whole lot of time with Larry, but Larry is one of the few scholars who has actually read my dissertation.

DC: All right!

MH: He actually told me he read it twice. We have one sort of disagreement. I think that the binitarian structure is actually evident in the Old Testament, as well.

DC: I heard a paper on that this morning.

MH: It's a category precursor to help kind of parse what comes later. The people who were writing in the Second Temple period are noticing certain trajectories, I believe, from the Old Testament. I'm a Semitics guy, so to cut to the chase and what Larry and I have talked about a few times, is in Canaanite religion you had a divine council that was headed by two separate deities (El and Baal). To me it's significant that not only does Yahweh get El language attributed to him and Baal language attributed to him, sort of fusing those two into the one God of Israel, but a second figure also gets Baal language, and Baal is the number two guy in the Canaanite pantheon.

DC: Doesn't Barker's argument, as well?

MH: I would disagree with Barker because I think she... I don't want to say Barker is more of a polytheist, but she sees some of the same things but she sort of works a different evolutionary arc that still includes an evolution from polytheism to monotheism. I don't believe in that trajectory. I think it's inherently incoherent at points. I don't want to digress too far, but you have the two-deity structure from Canaan, and I think it gets mimicked and altered in Israelite religion, where you have a transcendent Yahweh (an invisible Yahweh) and then a physical Yahweh (or an anthropomorphized Yahweh) essentially filling both slots.

DC: Ezekiel 1, seeing the *cavod* Yahweh, Daniel 7...

MH: The big thing that was important to Segal (the Son of Man passage) that was in his book *The Two Powers*. This drew so much attention. Segal in his books says that he thought that the whole Two Powers thing came from divine warrior stuff in Old Testament Israelite religion. He's correct in that, but it's actually a bigger picture than that. That part of my dissertation drew me into your work and works by Hurtado and other people because I see this as sort of a repurposing or repacking (whatever term we're going to use), that they're building off a category that they're familiar with, and then in between the testaments you have all this speculation about, "Who's the second power? Who's the divine man from Ezekiel 1 and Daniel 7?" And it's either a deified human or a special angel or something like that. But you have the category is the important thing, and then that gets built on. So I'm a Semitics guy, but I read a lot of Second Temple stuff—New Testament as it relates to this kind of material.

DC: To this question, yeah.

MH: It's really valuable. On our podcast, we get into a lot of these subjects. We're very content-oriented, and people are starving for content. They really are.

DC: That's true.

MH: They've picked up on a lot of these things and found it really interesting, so when I saw your new book come out, I thought this is a good time to talk to you.

15:00

DC: Good time to talk about this. Glad we're together.

MH: For our audience, you need to get *The Divine Christ*, and I'm glad you've characterized it the way you did—sort of a readable (not less scholarly, but written for someone who isn't a specialist)...

DC: Written for a broader audience. We're trying to put it on a shelf that people can reach, basically.

MH: And it's going to be more affordable, trust me, than the academic literature.

DC: [A German academic version] is about \$70, this is about \$20-\$25, something like that.

MH: Oh, I know. You go to the Brill table or Morris-Sebeck [?] and take out a loan. *The Divine Christ*—again, highly recommended if you're interested in High Christology and some of the things we've been talking about, please get the book. You'll find it very interesting and rewarding. Thanks for spending some time with us.

DC: Glad to do it. Enjoy the time.

MH: Thank you.

MH: Well, we're back at ETS annual meeting in Denver and we have with us Gary Breshears. His face will be familiar to a number of you who remember several years ago now the video promoting *Unseen Realm*. He was an early supporter—was in that video. So we're thrilled to welcome him. For those of you who didn't see that and to whom he would be new, I'm going to ask him to introduce himself.

GB: Okay. Well, I'm a friend of Mike Heiser's from way back when, and that makes me absolutely infamous and notorious and hated by the whole world. [laughter]

MH: Enemy of the academy. [laughing]

GB: Totally! No, I'm at Western Seminary. My home base is in Portland, but I teach in San Jose and Sacramento and Seattle, and we have gatherings that happen in Anchorage, Alaska. I've not been to a gathering in Honolulu yet, but perhaps it will happen. My primary area of teaching is theology, but I teach the whole Bible, as well. And then topics like spiritual warfare and such. I got interested in the Dan Brown stuff when *DaVinci Code* came out because of the nonsense that was done there—particularly the worldview behind it. That's when I met Mike, because he was doing an ETS paper on the worldview behind that.

MH: Yep, I remember that.

GB: And I went to it, but I never heard of Mike Heiser. But the topic was interesting. And I heard this and thought, "Man, this guy gets it!" So we had a long, intense conversation and it's history from there. So I've been at Western almost forty years and had all kinds of students and have been promoting what is now *Unseen Realm* since before *Unseen Realm* existed. I've learned a lot from Mike. I don't think I've taught you anything.

MH: [laughs] I read years ago... You did an article in JETS on the covenants back when the whole dispensational/covenant theology/progressive dispensational thing was going on. So yeah, you have taught me something. That was a good article—very helpful.

GB: I did that thing on progressive dispensationalism as a plenary... it would have been like 1992. At that point it was brand-new, and I was the one that really introduced progressive dispensationalism to the world through that plenary paper. It was a study group we had here at ETS. I've always been causing

trouble for people, and that's why you and I like each other so much I think!
[laughter]

MH: It must be! By the way, "progressive" there is a good term. It's not like a liberalizing of anything, but "progressive dispensational" is sort of a mediating position between your covenantal and your sort of Ryrie...

GB: I like to say it's a more biblical presentation of dispensationalism than classic stuff.

MH: Well, you would. [laughter]

GB: We would see continuity between Israel and the Church, as well as discontinuity, where classic dispensationalism never have the two connected. In covenantalism, there's really not much difference between them. And that's been developed a lot since then.

MH: Either of the old systems (or the other systems, I should say)... It's an either/or. But with progressive it's a both/and.

GB: The sense that the church never fulfilled any of Israel's prophecy (classic) or the supersessionism (replacement theology, where the Church replaces Israel and there's no future for Jewish people)...

MH: It's just an overstatement.

GB: Yeah, so progressive dispensationalism... The way I would say it is there's a national future for Israel as a double-blessed firstborn nation among the nations, but instead of separating the two completely the way classic does or just putting them all together as covenantalism does, I think there will be nations/tribes in the Millennium and the Jewish will be a double-blessed firstborn-type nation. So there's a lot of fun behind that.

MH: Yeah. So you have a very close relationship to The Bible Project.

GB: I do.

MH: So why don't you tell us about that?

20:00

GB: My connection with The Bible Project began with Tim Mackey when he was a Multnomah student. I got introduced to him through Ray Lubeck, and we connected and he came to Western and did an MA with us. I drug him off to Odessa, Ukraine, along with Jessica, to teach Ukrainian pastors along with me. So he's up in front of these pastors drawing little mountains on the white board. And you see where the drawings have come from there! They were just entranced by what he was teaching, and then he went to Madison to do his PhD

and we maintained a very close friendship. Then he was at Blackhawk Church there as teaching pastor and I was having him come back and do some adjunct teaching for me, and I helped negotiate getting him back to Portland. And then he and John Collins connected. They had been classmates at Multnomah. So they needed somebody that somebody had heard of, so they asked me to be on the board. So I got in the ground floor and I've been on the board (still am) as a theological/biblical advisor. I review scripts and those kinds of things. I help save them from terrible mistakes. Not all of them. But they had a picture of Jesus and they had him sawing something with a saw. [laughter] And I said, "Wait a minute, that's not what they do! They're like craftsman and they do stone, not wood." "Oh!!" So they changed the video to him chiseling on something.

MH: Yeah, the whole modern carpenter versus the ancient word. Well, I'm sure they were appreciative of that.

GB: It's a lot of fun. Just seeing how Bible Project has become one of the key teaching things for scripture in the whole world... We're working on the translations now. We're headed out toward fifty translations. So a friend of mine is in Mongolia (Jim and Corrie Ellison) and Corrie sent me an email and said, "Hey we've got some people who do Mongolian. Is the Bible Project ever coming into Mongolian?" And I thought, "Mongolian?? I don't know." I got him in touch with Ken Weigal. Sure enough, Mongolian is on our list and it will now go up about ten languages because of the connections through Corrie.

MH: You have a connection there, yeah.

GB: So if you want to read the Bible in Mongolian, okay! There will be a Bible Project for you in about three years.

MH: Is that adding subtitles, or what is involved in that?

GB: No, what we do is we translate the script using carefully selected and trained translators.

MH: Good idea.

GB: And then the sketchbook videos—they actually change them and put it in Mongolian.

MH: Wow!

GB: I've seen Arabic stuff. And so it's looking at the Creation video, for example, and it's in Arabic. And when it writes it, instead of writing left to write like with English letters, it writes from right to left in Arabic letters. It's an entire change on that. So it's a high-level translation team that uses professional video people, as well as... Oh, it runs about 50-70,000 dollars per translation.

MH: Yep. That's a lot of work.

GB: So we're having people fund it. There are people who really want the Bible Project in the major languages. So it's very fun to see this happen. So it'll go out in fifty languages. We're almost done with the Cantonese, nearly done with Spanish, well underway in French, German, Indonesian, Arabic, and it's going hard at it. We really want to bring this basic teaching to the whole world, not just the English-speaking world.

MH: The last thing we should hit on: you do a lot of travel.

GB: I do.

MH: You mentioned you're teaching internationally. Is that something you do because you're invited personally, or do you do it on behalf of the seminary, or a little bit of both?

GB: All I do is by personal invitations through friends in various places. So I teach all the way from untrained pastors in the Philippines on how to go from text to sermon to do expositional teaching, and these are guys... One of the guys I did here two years ago in the Philippines. If you know Manila, you know the Qipaos slum, which is one of the worst slums in the world. That's where he grew up. He was born in the slum. At five years old, he hated his dad so bad that he said, "I'm going to survive and kill that man." At five years old! His life was that hard. At 13, he was desperate for food, went into a church because they would give him food, joined the youth group, was doing a drama where they were competing among church and the church that won this drama competition would get a cash prize. The guys told him, "We'll give this to you if we win." Well, they're doing the Good Samaritan video. So if you've got a really tough slum kid, what role would you give him in that? He's the robber, of course, who beats up on the Jewish guy! Well, he got a little carried away with it and hauled out a switchblade and went after him and was going to kill him! That didn't go over real well. He ended up in jail on assault charges, got saved in jail—genuinely saved—and the chaplain said, "You need to go back and forgive your father." And he said, "I'll kill the blankety-blank, but I'll never forgive him." And the guy just listened to him, showed him scripture, and he went back to his home, found his dad—not stone-drunk, but typically drunk. He picked him up off the chair, hugged him, and said, "I forgive you, dad" and felt his dad hugged him back. Two years later he baptized his father.

25:00

MH: Wow.

GB: He was one of my students in the Philippines. Two weeks later I was teaching Doctor in Ministry students at International Graduate School of Leadership. I get to do everything!

MH: Yeah. If you can handle... I follow you on Twitter and it's like, "Really? You're where? And now you're..." I don't know how you handle all the travel.

GB: Most recently in Beirut overseas. Yeah, I get to do a lot of very cool stuff.

MH: Wow. Well, thanks for sharing a few minutes with us and telling us about yourself and what you do. I'm sure the audience is going to... You're going to be on the map now with them.

GB: Oh yeah—a friend of Mike Heiser's!

MH: Maybe they'll give you more to do! [laughter] Thanks a lot.

GB: Yep.

MH: Welcome back to our interviews at the Evangelical Theological Society meeting in Denver. We have with us now Mark Futato. That name will be familiar to some of you who have done some Hebrew study, either through me or somewhere else online, because Mark is the author/creator of (I think) arguably the best-selling introductory Hebrew grammar. That would be where some of you may have heard of him. Mark and I go back a long way with Logos, with Mobile Ed. He's a professor and he has done more than one Mobile Ed course for us. He was there from the very beginning, so some of you might know him from there. But for those of you who don't, I'm going to ask him to introduce himself briefly. There are a few things we want to talk about that I think our audience will be interested in. So tell 'em who you are!

MF: My name is Mark Futato, as Mike said. I am currently a professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at RTS, Orlando. I've been there for twenty years now. Before that, I taught for eleven years at Westminster in California, and before that I was the pastor of a local church outside the Washington, D.C. area. Backing up from there, I did my graduate studies at the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Prior to that, I did my seminary studies at Westminster in Philadelphia. And I started all of this as an undergrad at Geneva College, just outside of Pittsburgh.

MH: Wow. So you're a Semitist, obviously—Semitic languages, biblical Hebrew, that sort of thing. What do you teach now? Give us an example of what your teaching schedule is like. What do they have you doing?

MF: Currently, over half of my teaching is Hebrew. We have a sequence on the Orlando campus of Hebrew 1, Hebrew 2 (that's mainly grammar) and then Hebrew 3, which is exegesis. Until now, I've been teaching two different tracks.

One of those tracks has been traditional. I use my *Beginning Biblical Hebrew* (40 chapters). It's all just very traditional face-to-face classroom Hebrew instruction. The other track that I've been teaching for a good number of years has been innovative. It is only half of the grammar that you would learn in a traditional track. So what do I do with the other half of my time? I teach students how to use Logos Software as the other part of their Hebrew class. I jokingly tell my students in the electronic track that I'm only going to give them half of the Hebrew to forget over the years. [laughter] But I do guarantee them that for the rest of their ministry, they're going to be using what they have learned in my coursework. And it is gratifying. I get emails from students who have been out of school for 3, 4, 5, 6, 10 years, and they say, "Thanks for what you taught me in that electronic track. I am using my Hebrew and my Logos Software in my ministry all the time." And that's really the way it should be.

MH: Just to be honest about it, that's quite different than someone who only had a traditional course—that had really no tools-based approach at all. When you go out in the ministry, who has five or ten hours a week to keep up with vocabulary and forms? It's not realistic.

30:00

MF: No. The other thing about that is in terms of the outcomes, it gives you the outcomes that you're looking for. In a typical seminary curriculum, we don't have nearly enough time to get students anywhere near competency in reading Hebrew. But we can really teach them how to use good, sophisticated software. I maintain that for a pastor or a serious student of the Bible (a teacher), they can't really use the best of what is inside Logos if they don't all least know a modicum of Greek and Hebrew. They need to have heard of a *piel* and a *hiphil*. They need to know that *melek* is a noun and it's not an adverb. But with that modicum of Hebrew grammar, they can really... Two P's. Since I'm Presbyterian, two P's. One of those is "precise." I give the example that if you're studying Psalm 1 and you see that word "blessed," you say, "Let me find all the examples of that." If you're limited to English, you find all of the occurrences of b-l-e-s-s-e-d... The problem is there's no precision there, because you've got a bunch of *asre's* and you've got a bunch of *baruk's* and you don't even know it.

MH: Right. Different Hebrew lemmas get the same English translation.

MF: I teach students enough Hebrew, and with the ease of use of Logos I teach them to right-click and then they can find all of the Hebrew words that are underlying the "blessed" in Psalm 1. So number one, their Bible study is going to be much more precise. But number two, it's also going to be more profound. There are a lot of tools—let's just say *The New International Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis*. Without knowing Hebrew, you can use that. But you cannot use it as well and as profoundly if you don't know at least how to sound out and read the Hebrew words. So that's been my basic philosophy. Now, I just found out that this year is the last year that I'm going to be allowed to teach that.

MH: Oh, wow.

MF: So all of my students are going to have to go through the traditional track. So I'm actually thinking about what to do about that. You've had some experience with this, Mike, so you and I need to chat more. I'm actually thinking about how to perhaps expand my BasicHebrew.com website, which is just the Hebrew lessons and just the Logos lessons, and turn it into a subscription-based Hebrew course (Hebrew 1 and Hebrew 2). Because I really think that it's valuable, not just for people who are studying for professional ministry but for anybody in the church who wants a more precise and more profound understanding of the Bible.

MH: Absolutely.

MF: So over the coming year, I'm going to be looking at how to maybe start to teach that on my own—something like what you've been doing.

MH: Now, in the few minutes before we went live here, you mentioned that there's an MDiv program at RTS that is largely distance. I want you to talk a little bit about that, but where does Hebrew fall in that program?

MF: Okay, a couple of things. First I'll talk about the program as a whole. RTS has always been a league leader in terms of seminary education and being online. I think we were the first to offer a fully online MAR. So we've been in this game a long time. Under David John, we have some really good leadership. On the Orlando campus... well, let me back up on that. A couple of years ago, the accrediting agencies finally granted permission to give a fully online MDiv. Since it's a professional degree, they were always of the opinion that there had to be some level of face-to-face education. But they've done away with that. Well, our board was appreciative of that but wasn't willing to go the full way into an online program. But in Orlando we're experimenting with a distance MDiv or a hybrid MDiv. What that means is to get your Orlando MDiv, you only need 33 hours of on-campus credit. The rest you can do online or at whatever campus you can get to. But another dimension of that is we have provided a fair number of those courses in a hybrid format. That means that students will do half of the course online before they ever come to campus. So these hybrid or distance MDiv students are able to do their MDiv degree without ever uprooting, because they can get all of their Orlando residential credits by coming in Januaries and summers. Back in the day, a student could come for one week (one air fare, room and board), but because all of those hours had to be in class, you could only do one class. Now, with the ability to do half of that work before you even get there, we have students who will do three classes in one week. That is really efficient with regard to their funds and their time away from family. So the hybrid or distance MDiv (which isn't on all the RTS campus—just RTS Orlando) is really a great program.

35:00

MH: It sounds to me like if you triple up like that... What is that? Probably doing three or four times you can get close to wiping out that residency?

MF: We have a couple of curricular structures set up. I don't know that anybody's done it, but in theory there is a curriculum to do a distance MDiv in three years without ever moving.

MH: Wow.

MF: Now, it's more likely that if you work hard you're going to do it in four, because a lot of these students have jobs, families. But according to the schedule, you're able to do that. Now, where the Hebrew fits in, I have been teaching that Hebrew 1, 2, and Hebrew Exegesis for the global campus, which is where our Orlando students have been able to get that credit. It's been my online/electronic hybrid, half-Hebrew, half-Logos Software, but that's going away at the end of 2019 and it's going to be replaced by a traditional approach to teaching Hebrew, albeit delivered online. There is a difference between (in my estimation, from my years of teaching) fully online and teaching hybrid classes. An online class is not a face-to-face class delivered over the internet. There are different strategies—different objectives—that you use in accomplishing your goals. But the new version, which is in good hands... It's going to be taught, I gather, by Miles VanPelt, and Miles has been around the block; he knows what he's doing. He has the Hebrew courses already published with Zondervan, so it's in good hands, but it's going to be a significantly different approach than what I've been doing for the last, I don't know, 15 years.

MH: Wow. Any other books you want to tell us about? Something that you've recently authored?

MF: I'm surprised you asked that question! [laughter]

MH: Wait, there's more!

MF: There is a book that should be out this summer. So as you're thinking about, "What do I buy my friends and family and neighbors and pastor and everybody that I know at work... What do I buy them for Christmas?" It's called *An Introduction to the Hebrew Accents*. [Mike laughs] You laugh!

MH: You're right, I am!

MF: I would say out of all the books I've ever written, this hands-down has been the most fun book I've ever written.

MH: Okay, now, are you doing that with an angle toward how this is an exegetical aid?

MF: Absolutely.

MH: Okay, because that's a huge value-add.

MF: I'll give you a little bit of background to that. I'm not a philosopher or the son of a philosopher, but when I went to seminary, I was trained in the school of Cornelius Van Til. One thing I took away from Van Til was the idea that you don't have to have exhaustive knowledge in order to have true knowledge. And I think with regard to the Hebrew accents, two mistakes are made. One, sometimes if somebody does want to teach them, they feel like students have to know absolutely everything about the accent system. And students are going to get lost in the forest for the trees. We do not need to turn them into Masoretes in order to have them use the accents exegetically in a beneficial way. The other extreme is, "Well, they're just so complicated I'm not going to bother teaching them anything at all." So I've come up with them via media. I'm going to teach them enough about the accents that they can use them exegetically without getting them lost in the forest for the trees. The basic flow of the book is that I introduce them to the concept—the fundamental concept—of continuous dichotomy. An accent breaks a verse in half, then you break the halves in half, then you break the halves of the halves in half. I teach them the big disjunctive accents. Then I teach them the conjunctive accents, which don't play as major a role in the exegetical process. Then after that I have a chapter on how to use this stuff in the exegetical process.

MH: Do you use Daniel 9 (the Weeks) as an example of this?

MF: I do not, no. I'm also neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. [laughter] And I'm not an apocalypticist, so...

MH: So you're not going to use the accents to justify an eschatological position? As much fun as that could be?

40:00 **MF:** No. Most people who read the Hebrew Bible with the accents are post-Millennial. [laughter] So where was I? Oh, yes, yes. So in this chapter on how to use them, it's arbitrary, but it's heuristic. I divide them into three categories. Places where you can see that the accents make a subtle difference... For example, in the context of the Shema, it says, "Repeat them to your sons and talk about them when you..." and then it gives the various environments. And I think when we pick up our English Bible, we're led to think, "repeat them to your sons," number one, and "repeat them or speak about them" in all these environments. But if you look at the accents, the verse is cut in half after "speak about them." So it's "repeat them and speak about them."

MH: So all the other ones are on equal footing, yeah.

MF: In other words, those qualifications of when and where, that qualifies the whole half of the verse, not just the speaking. Now, nobody's going to go to hell if they don't know that. [laughter] Am I allowed to say that on this podcast? You know what I mean? But it does make a small difference, and there are scads of places where you see these small differences. Another one is at the end of Job. Some translations lead you to believe that there were Job's sons and there were Job's daughters and there were the rest of Job's family. But when you read the accents, there are only two groups: the sons and the daughters (pause) and the rest of the people— so a subtle difference. There are also places where it makes a more significant difference. Now, I'm not saying this is my view, mind you, I'm saying this is the view of the Masoretes. You'll appreciate this if you haven't seen it.

MH: Okay, go ahead.

MF: It's in Genesis 1 and I think it's the 21st verse. It says, "God created" and then there are four direct objects. The first is the big *tanninim*, and then you get three other direct objects, and then you get the expression, "God saw that it was good." So you have two main predications in this verse: number one, God created (all the direct objects) and number two, God saw that it was good. Now logically, where the Masoretes would normally divide that verse in half (and half has nothing to do with verb length or word length—it's sense), it would be "God created" and then here are four direct objects, major pause, and then it would say, "God saw that it was good." Ah, but it doesn't! The Masoretes put the major disjunctive accent on *tanninim ha gedolim*, which is weird!

MH: It is weird, and it's also interesting.

MF: Now let me tell you why it's weird. They have made the major division that separates four of the direct objects—the first from the next three. In a sense, that makes no sense. But why?

MH: But the statement...

MF: When you look at it from a linguistic point of view in terms of tree structure, the Athnah divides the verse in half, so as in the Logos Hebrew Cantillation System, we're going to call Athnah A the first half and Athnah B the second half. But you see, the "God saw that it was good" is Zaqef B. And what that means is, like the example with Deuteronomy, "and God saw that it was good" only qualifies the last three direct objects. It does not qualify the *tanninim*.

MH: Those are the great sea dragons—the sea serpents. That makes conceptual sense because of the whole chaos metaphor. That's really interesting.

MF: So you ask the question, "Why did the Masoretes put the accent there?"

MH: You've sold your book now. [laughing]

MF: They want to dissociate the *tanninim* from the affirmation that it was good.

MH: From the affirmation of goodness... that's...

MF: Now, I'm not saying this is my interpretation.

MH: All right.

MF: I'm just telling you what the Masoretes are thinking.

MH: Good enough for me.

MF: Is that good?

MH: [laughing] That's good!

MF: You gonna buy the book?

MH: I'm gonna buy the book now.

MF: Okay. [laughter]

MH: Thanks for spending some time with us and talking about what you do. Again, I get questions all the time about "where can I take a class" or "where can I take a degree if I don't want to move but I want to go to school?" There you go! RTS has been in the distance ed. business a long time, so you might want to check them out. So thanks a lot.

MF: You're welcome, Mike.

TS: All right, Mike. Those were three great interviews. I really liked Gary. I'm a big fan of the Bible Project. We also have Tim and John coming on in two or three weeks on our podcast, so stay tuned for that. But three great interviews, and we've got a ton more to come. We just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.