

**Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**  
**Episode 248**  
**Live from Denver**  
**November 24, 2018**

**Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)**  
**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**  
**Guests: David Burnett (DB)**  
**Doug Van Doorn (DV)**  
**Greg Outlaw (GO)**

**Episode Summary**

Dr. Heiser and special guests answer questions from a live audience. Thank you to everyone who came and joined us in Denver, Colorado.

Questions:

- What causes child demon possession? [3:30]
- How do we teach people about the differences between the modern and ancient worlds? [7:50]
- Should we be promoting the idea of a personal relationship with Jesus? [10:15]
- How much does one's interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4 affect their interpretation of the whole Bible? [20:10]
- Was the Law about sinning against God or against the community? And should Jesus' blood be seen as a decontamination sacrifice? [45:35]
- How should we sort through NAR or works-based theology? [1:00:00]
- Why does David Burnett think a seven-tiered heaven was authentically Second Temple instead of the Mesopotamian three-tiered motif? [1:08:10]
- What do you see as the future of the Church? [1:16:00]
- Did the Nephilim have a chance to repent? [1:39:00]
- Why don't modern Christians want to use the Hebraic calendar? [1:52:00]
- How has Unseen Realm content escaped us for so long, and how do church leaders get the word out to their people? [1:55:30]
- Can the number of the sons of God be quantified, and how are they still exercising their rule over the nations? [2:07:00]
- How should we think of other ancient writings besides the Bible? [2:14:07]

## Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 248: Live from Denver. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, how's everybody doing?

[cheers from audience]

**TS:** This is fun! This is probably my favorite thing to do when we cover these conferences.

**MH:** Yeah, we've done this for what, three or four years?

**TS:** It's our third year. We've covered the conferences, but this is our third live meet-up.

**MH:** Thanks, everybody, for coming. I know you might have had other things to do, so it's nice to see you come out. I should explain who's up here with me, because obviously we're going to open it up to Q&A. But I brought some friends. To my right, as he was already introduced, Pastor Doug Van Doorn, who is local. This is the guy who wrote the original manuscript for the handbook for *Unseen Realm*. I often get asked, "What's the best way to teach the content in my church?" Get his handbook, okay? [laughs] If you go up to Amazon and you find *Unseen Realm*, it's going to be there along with things people purchased along with *Unseen Realm*. The cover looks pretty much like *Unseen Realm*. There's a little bit of a difference there that you'll be able to detect, but he's the author of that.

And then to his right, we have David Burnett. David managed to come over. He's been on the podcast a lot. If you were up here, you can ask any of us questions. David is here, of course, for the academic meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, which technically started today. He's at Marquette in a doctoral program in Early Christianity and Second Temple Judaism. If you've listened to the podcast for any amount of time, he should be familiar.

And then to his right... How many of you have watched at least one FringePop321 episode? We've got a few hands here, and in the back. [laughs] This is Greg Outlaw. He is the CEO of AllAboutGod.com. He is the ministry partner with my non-profit (Miqulat.org) to create FringePop. Greg's specialty is search engine optimization. AllAboutGod.com is actually sort of a network of websites aimed at evangelism and discipleship. FringePop was really his idea. So if you have questions about that... I'll probably bring him into the conversation. If you have questions directly for him, please feel free to do so. So that's who's up here.

**TS:** All right. Before we get started, I just want to thank Pastor Andrews and Colorado Community Church for hosting us. We appreciate that. And our friend, Phillip, for helping organize that. We appreciate that, sir. With that, if anybody has any questions, please come up. Here's the mic. It's ready to go!

**MH:** I should say, at least on my part, it doesn't have to be a biblical question. You can ask me anything. If it's personal, I'll decide if I'm going to answer it or not. [laughter]

3:30 **Questioner:** Hello, my name is James Clapper. I'll start out with a lightweight question. What are your opinions on child demon possession? In Mark 7 and 9, it talks about a boy and a girl who are possessed by a demon. I was kind of wondering what causes that? What causes a child to become demon possessed? Is it an action of the parents or the child themselves?

**MH:** I don't know (and David, you can chime in here if you want), but I can't really think of anything that specifically... I don't see the victims of demon possession in the Gospels being blamed necessarily for it. There's acting out as a result of it. If that's the case, I think my answer would be that he doesn't have to do anything. In other words, this is an occurrence or a happenstance that isn't triggered by something necessarily. Can you think of any example? I can't.

5:00 **DB:** Not in that instance. And in the Synoptics, at least (because John doesn't have any exorcisms), there seems to be a sort of genuine understanding that despite what the crowds might assume about the people's family or their heritage, the demons are seen as oppressors of the person. So Jesus is releasing them from oppression and there's no clear[00:05:00] etiology for most of the possessions. There's no clear origin story for it. All we have is the release from it, so it's hard to say. I don't know enough to speak on that.

**MH:** I can't think of any specific example where the victim is sort of like, "Well, you did this, and this is what happened."

**GO:** What about the idea of like a familial spirit? Do you think that would relate to it at all?

**MH:** If we're going by the familiar spirits in the Old Testament, maybe like the Python Oracle and things like that, we still don't have origin stories for that. Is that a possession? Is that kind of what you're suggesting.

**Questioner:** Yes.

**MH:** I wouldn't be too troubled by calling such a thing a possession, because the person is under the control of the familiar spirit, even though you don't have the

same sort of acting out with violence or that kind of behavior. To me, the issue is control. So I'd be willing to lump those things together.

**DB:** One thing about the Old Testament demon possession is there really isn't any, unless you're reading your Catholic or Orthodox Bible. The first instance of demon possession that we find is in the book of Tobit in the Apocrypha. There's differing explanations as to why that is. Some trace it back after the fact into certain stories in the Old Testament, but an explicit, described possession isn't until you get to Tobit, which is at least 150-200 years before Jesus—something like that.

**MH:** What David said is correct as far as examples. You used the word "explicit." We did a whole episode on why exorcism is, from the reading of the New Testament, not a surprising component of the messianic profile—or perhaps an *expected* component of the messianic profile. Basically, Solomon traditions in the Second Temple period attribute exorcistic powers to Solomon. And, of course, Jesus is the son of David and in the Solomonic line. But that tradition is also linked back to one or two Psalms where, depending on the language of the Psalm and how it's translated, you might get a reference to powers over demons or powers over the powers of darkness. So that's sort of the thread or the trajectory that's followed in the intertestamental period that moves on into the New Testament. So if that's the case, you would at least have the idea of demonic oppression and deliverance in the Old Testament. But there are no explicit examples of that.

7:50

**Questioner:** My name is Nate. This question is actually from a fellow listener named Daniel Wesley. He writes: "I have learned that a common denominator issue with Christian Middle Earth is not understand the epistemological differences between the modern and ancient world." He's asking, Dr. Heiser, "Do you have any recommendations for how to teach people about these complicated biblical, theological, and philosophical issues in a way that they can approach?"

**MH:** I would say if the problem is confusing... Let me put it this way: If the problem is reading the Bible through the lens of a modern worldview and then finding that to be somewhat troublesome or in conflict with the ancient worldview, then my answer to that is "don't read it with modern eyes." Application is different than hermeneutics. I'm not an enemy of application. But the ancient writers were writing from their perspective—their worldview—with their vocabulary and knowledge base and the way they looked at reality. And they're writing to people that this all applies to, as well. So it's an ancient communicator and the communication is being received by ancient people. It makes sense to me to try to read it with ancient eyes but still apply it, in terms of our situation now. But I realize what the question is pointing to in terms of the conflict. There is either maybe a resistance to that or maybe an unease with doing that. For me, this is an intentional decision to at least try to read scripture with ancient eyes and then

make the best of it based upon our best shot at trying to see what the writer was trying to communicate. There are many contexts. Worldview is a big one, literary is another one. We're just trying to do our best with situating the text in its own context and then reading it in light of those contexts, and then doing the best we can to make it relevant to our lives. I think the answer is that you have to make an intentional decision to try to approach it that way and do the best you can with it.

**Questioner:** I have one more, is that okay?

**MH:** Mm, hmm.

10:15

**Questioner:** **It's more practical. Is having a personal relationship with Jesus something that we should strive for? A lot of churches seem to be promoting this idea, yet it seems to be entirely emotionally-charged and doesn't seem to have any grounds in scripture itself. How should we approach this subject—the idea of a relationship with God that's personal?**

**MH:** To me that sounds like the problem is an emotion-based relationship, as opposed to something that mixes in a biblically-grounded knowledge as part of the basis for that relationship. If the parent/child or father/child metaphor in the New Testament means anything at all, it has to at least mean some kind of relationship in a positive way. Otherwise you sort of eviscerate the metaphor of any relevance at all. Again, as I hear that question, I think what seems to be the target there is having a purely emotion-based reason for doing what you're doing as a Christian or in church or in pursuing some relationship with God, or a spiritual journey that lacks some very specific grounding. That's what I hear, anyway, in the question. Do you know the person? [laughs]

**Questioner:** Personally going to a church where they're all about experiencing God and the worship seems really over-the-top at times, where it seems more performance-based instead of actually trying to worship God, like in a liturgical sense. They do a lot of repetitive stuff that almost looks like a faith-healer session, where the smells and bells kind of stuff... Really struggling in that church context because people in my family enjoy that, but I'm personally sitting there and thinking otherwise.

**MH:** Well, I know people who do enjoy that, or not, and are really grounded. I hate to put it this way, but the worship sort of seems incidental to them. It's not really affecting them in a good way. They can either bypass it or just dismiss it or think nothing at all of it. I say that to say this: If the person really is grounded, it shouldn't have that negative effect as far as "this is destroying my relationship with God," because if that's the case then I'd wonder really how much you understand what's involved in the cross and salvation and God's pursuit of you and so on and so forth. On the other hand, I can see that if you don't have that, then it does become some kind of entirely emotionally-driven thing. I'm not the

most emotional guy. [laughter] You're laughing, Burnett. I'll give you an example, and this will probably... I got invited to speak at the Frequency Conference a couple weeks ago. This was a predominantly African-American gathering. There were 1,200 people there. It was great. I was so glad that Dr. Eric Mason's Epiphany Church there was the one that set up the event. He had read *Unseen Realm* and asked me if I would come and I did. I spoke a couple of times. But I stood out like a sore thumb in their worship service. [laughs] I'm okay with that. Sometimes I like to see people enjoying things like that, and I didn't wonder in that gathering... If I was in another church where I didn't know that there were a lot of people who were there intentionally that had really solid theology... These are church planters, pastors, people doing all sorts of things in ministry that may or may not even be on the radar as far as publicly-known ministries. Everybody was engaged there. It was about racial reconciliation and unity and cultural healing and stuff like that. Everybody's serious there. So I kind of like that because I don't have any nagging suspicion that this is all that there is. In other words, they had substance. I felt quite assured and comfortable in the environment. It's just that I don't have any rhythm, okay? [laughter] I don't have any sense for something like that. I know you're just dying to say something.

15:00

**DB:** I want to respond to the emotional-church stuff. I come out of that tradition from when I was young, too. I think the issue isn't the "relationship with God" language, per say. It's how we rightly understand that language. Because generally in evangelicalism (especially in the South where I'm from), when people say "to have a relationship with God" what it generally translates to in praxis is a positive emotion. It's like really exuberant joy, dancing, and singing. Then if it's not really positive or joyful, then there's like something wrong with your relationship or something, which is complete nonsense. It does away with the entire lament and petition tradition in the Bible and in Christianity. Sometimes things just suck and they don't get better. We have endless lament Psalms. Almost a third of our Psalms are lament, and yet we sing "joy, joy, joy, joy, joy!" every Sunday. Well, sometimes you don't feel joy. And sometimes God is nowhere to be found and it's a dark night of the soul for everybody. That's the reality, I think, for more people than they would like to admit that are in these kinds of churches. If you're not joyful and raising your hands all the time, there's something wrong with your "relationship." That's the word that gets thrown around. The problem is that anyone with families knows relationships are not always joyful. Anyone with people that feel distance, that feel abandoned, that have been wronged and have not received justice... This is where we cry the cry of the prophets. This is where we cry the laments. This is where we cry... The earliest Christian tradition of sanctification is *imitatio Christi*—the imitation of Christ. And what does Christ do? He laments on behalf of the injustice that's taken place against him and against his city and against the people—against the poor, against the widow and the orphan. Sometimes tears are necessary. Sometimes lament is necessary. Sometimes joy is not. Yeah, "joy comes in the morning," but it's not the morning yet! Resurrection hasn't happened yet. We're still in the wilderness. I think evangelicalism has to (this is not an option, in my

view) recapture the lament tradition. It *has to*. Because what we're doing if we don't is we're saying that the world is okay the way that it is. And it's not. If we're singing "joyful" all the time, then we're speaking a lie. The world is messed up and it needs to be set right. And so what's the prayer the early Christians prayed in the Didache—the earliest example of Christian tradition that we have in catechesis (what they were being taught in Antioch)? Three times a day they would have to pray the Lord's Prayer. It replaced the Shema in Antioch, where morning, noon, and night they would pray the Lord's prayer. And what would they pray? "May your kingdom come in heaven as it is in heaven?" No, "on *earth* as it is in heaven," which means that it's not finished. And they prayed it all the time, wishing for it and dreaming for it. So we have to recapture that lament tradition. It is okay to cry in church. It is okay to be pissed off in church. It's okay to be mad at church. It's even okay to question God. Read David. Read the Psalms. Read every single prophet. Read Jesus on the cross. This is okay, guys! It's okay to lament, because God hears that. He's not beyond questioning. You can question him all day long. Read the Psalms, please.

**DV:** The original question was about a personal relationship. The way these guys have taken it with the idea of this "feeling" sort of Christianity... If that's what it's related to, then there's problems. But then take what has just been said about this full-orbed Christianity, where you have all the feelings of humanity being expressed. And then that that into the idea of a relationship with Christ and that has a totally different kind of a meaning. If we're able as churches to recapture what he's saying, the idea of a personal relationship with Christ would be completely different in the way people interpret it. There's nothing wrong with a personal relationship with Christ through his Spirit. And we grieve the Holy Spirit. What's the opposite of that, an impersonal relationship? I don't even know what that would be. So of course we have a personal relationship, but he's the God of the universe, too.

20:10

**Questioner:** Dr. Heiser, I've invited several people here tonight that are just new to the entire concept of the divine council. I wonder if you would take a moment to give us a summation of that perspective and then would you also answer this question: How much would you say that Genesis 6:1-4 provides the basis of how we should interpret the rest of the Bible all the way through Revelation?

**MH:** I'll take the second one first. I think Genesis 6:1-4 (and I'll say 1-5 because verse 5 is really important, especially in Second Temple tradition and understanding and what's going on there) bleeds into the New Testament in a number of passages, I wouldn't say it's some sort of guiding hermeneutic. I would just say that what happens there provides sort of a trajectory that is discernible and was discerned in the intertestamental period. If you kind of know what's going on in the Second Temple period and if you're familiar with the Mesopotamian background for Genesis 6:1-5 and you can see how Second Temple Judaism picked up on that and understood the earlier Mesopotamian

context... So if you know what you're looking at, you will see that thread sort of leak into a few other passages—maybe a dozen or so. It just depends, really, how granular you want to get. But it's not a guiding hermeneutic for scripture, by any means. It's a component of a worldview.

Really where I would fit it (because this is not Mike's outlook, it's an ancient Jewish outlook) is it's one of three rebellions. It's the middle one. The fundamental problem that is presented to humanity and that is dealt with is not the Nephilim. The Nephilim stuff is really about communicating the idea that supernatural rivals to Yahweh are rising up and are in control of enemies to God's own children to either keep them out of the land or to destroy them. That's dealt with in David's time. Look who actually deals with the Nephilim problem. You've got Abraham preceding the conquest back in Genesis 14. You've got Joshua (Yeshua) in the conquest, and then you've got David. All three of those personalities/figures are prefigurements or analogues to the messiah. That's not an accident! But that problem is taken care of in the Davidic era. What isn't taken care of (if we understand what's going on in Genesis 6) is the problem of depravity. The original Mesopotamian context for this is the Apkallu story. It accounts for every element of Genesis 6:1-5—the forbidden knowledge that troubled the Jewish writers, the whole concept of being in league with chaos and looking positively toward Babylon... All of that stuff was favorable in Mesopotamia. The Apkallu in the Mesopotamian story were the ones that gave them civilization. They're the reason Babylon is great.

25:00

Well, in biblical thought, Babylon is chaos. Babylon is anything but great. And so the knowledge that led to the greatness of Babylon in a Babylonian's eye is the thing that destroyed humanity in the Israelite/Judaic worldview. The forbidden knowledge is essentially what accelerated and proliferated human depravity, which is another way of saying they taught us how to more efficiently destroy ourselves and to become idolaters. This is why, when you get out of Genesis 6 and you've got the giant clan stuff, there are clear connection points back to Babylon—back to the Ammorite traditions of the Babylonians, whether it's Og's bed, the term "Ammorite" (which is also used in Amos to describe the occupants of the land)... You have hooks back to Babylon because what they're trying to communicate is that these are bad guys and they are part of the reason why the world is in chaos and in the place that it is. You can cut off the Nephilim thing (again, that ends with David), but what you don't deal with is depravity. That's the bigger problem.

So let's go back now to this Divine Council Worldview thing. I'll take one step back and talk about the three rebellions. If you ask the average Christian why the world is in the mess that it's in, you're going to get "Genesis 3 and the Fall." If you ask the same thing of a Second Temple Jew or a literate Israelite, that's not the answer you're going to get. They're going to look at three problems. There's what happened in Eden. We have human and divine rebellion. Rebellion erupts both in God's heavenly family (the council) and on earth. The result of that is death.



That's why the leader of that rebellion on the supernatural side becomes associated with motifs about death and Sheol and the Lord of the Dead and preternatural spirits that belong in Sheol. You have all of these passages that characterize that event and associate it with death. The problem there is death. We have to cure that problem now. Then you get to the Genesis 6 thing and the problem is the reception of knowledge that leads to human corruption and idolatry. So we've got to fix that. Then the third problem is what happens at Babel—the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview. We've had Eden, we've had the Flood, and now we've got Babel and we're still sort of out of whack in terms of doing the thing that God asked us to do, which was a reiteration of the original Adamic commands. Again, God is trying to kick-start what he wants in the first place. He wants to return his presence to earth with a human family—the kingdom of God idea. When that is resisted, God says, "Enough!" Deuteronomy 32:8:

**<sup>8</sup> When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,  
when he divided mankind,  
he fixed the borders of the peoples  
according to the number of the sons of God.**

**<sup>9</sup> But the Lord's portion is his people,  
Jacob his allotted heritage.**

If you've read my material or you listen to the podcast, you know what this is about. God divorces humanity. We're done, but not quite completely. Because God surrenders humanity. It's as though he abandons the thing he wants the most—to have a human family. He says, "I've had enough of this." But then he turns around and says, "Okay, here's what we're going to do. Rather than just wipe everything off and be done with everything permanently, I'm going to go to Ur and I'm going to have a conversation with a guy named Abram. His wife is too old to have children, which means she's perfect because I'm going to raise up a new humanity—a new human family—through them. They're going to be originated by a supernatural act on my behalf. They're going to become the place where I try to work with humanity to kick-start the kingdom of God idea (the reign of God and relationship with God). They're supposed to be the conduit through which the nations are going to come back. He makes a covenant with Abraham and says, "Hey, it's through you and your seed that all of these nations are going to be blessed and brought back into the family." We know this story.

The point is, if you think that those are the three problems—death, depravity, and now we've got most of humanity on the outs... They're estranged from God. Yeah, they're under the Curse, too, but God abandoned them. They're allotted to lesser divine beings—lesser gods, lesser sons of God. They're not God—they're placeholders. We don't know when they become corrupt. Psalm 82 is all about the fact that they do. They have a stranglehold on their nations. They put their nations' populations in chaos and destruction. Psalm 82 is about God's anger

with them. He's going to punish them. He's going to rise up at the end. We did a whole episode on this with David. "Rise up, Oh God, and take back the nations" and all that stuff. So this is the condition of the world. All this rebellion has caused death, depravity, and estrangement from God. And in the cosmic realm (the supernatural world) you have rebellion. There's going to be death when there shouldn't have been. God is going to destroy the sons of God (Psalm 82), and now he has rivals. He has enemies in the spiritual world. It's a total chaos picture. So if you believe all this and you think all this, when you think about messiah, what are you going to think? "Oh, he's back here to cure Genesis 3!" No, he's here to fix *all* of it. If you have an eye to that and you read the New Testament, this is why Paul (back to the episode with David)... Somehow when Paul thinks of the resurrection he doesn't think, "Man, I'm going to be at my ideal weight! I'm going to get the body I want!" Don't even start, okay? [laughter] Instead of thinking about the personal effect, in many cases the next thought in his head is, "Yeah, the demise—the nullification, the stripping of the authority of the rulers and the authorities and the principalities and the powers!" Why does Paul connect those two things in his head? Because the messiah rose from the dead, ascended, and that nullified their authority.

How does this work? Well, we know that the resurrection, of course, fixes the death problem. That's the one everybody sees because that's the one that's preached all the time. How does it address depravity? Because that's the lingering problem from Genesis 6. How does it fix that? I'm of the opinion that this is where the talk of Jesus in his relationship to the Holy Spirit really matters, because Jesus rises from the dead, he ascends... Why does he need to ascend? Yes, he needs to be on the throne. That's part of it. But he needs to ascend so that the Spirit will come. You've got the Spirit sent from the Father, from the Son (without getting into that whole controversy about who sends who and all that). But you have the Spirit come to put the capstone—to fulfill his part of the New Covenant, which is obviously linked to Jesus. But what does the Spirit do? The Spirit empowers believers to resist temptation. The Spirit does a number of things. But that is the way depravity is blunted and retarded from the domination that it can have. It's through the Spirit that we are able to not be the depraved people that we are. All of this is conditioned on the finality—the accomplishment—of what Jesus does on the cross, in the resurrection, and in the ascension. This is why Paul mixes the Spirit of Christ with the Spirit of God in some places. It's why Paul refers to the Lord, who is the Spirit, two times. There's this link. *The Unseen Realm* stuff is kinda fixated on Jesus a little bit. As Jesus is-but-isn't God... I mean, he is God but he's not the Father, but he's still God. So you have the Spirit who is-but-isn't Jesus. This is why you have this mixed language about Jesus and the Spirit. How else could Jesus say, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst?" It's a reference to the Spirit. All the talk about "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age"... well, he can say that because in some way the Spirit is not Jesus and is distinct from Jesus, but in some way he is. And since Jesus is God, the Spirit is also God. You have this interchange of these figures and these ideas and these

persons, but it's the Spirit that combats our depravity. And then the third part (how does the messiah fix the third rebellion?), well, that's kind of obvious. The ministry of Paul has that focus—bringing back the nations and releasing them from their bondage. Paul goes into a city and it's like, "Hey, I know you people really believe."

35:00 How many of you have heard me tell the story about that pagan podcast I was on—"The Voice of Olympus?" You don't know that story? I've got to tell you this story. I get this email one day and the email is signed, "Hercules." So that kind of caught my attention. He's the host of a podcast called "The Voice of Olympus" and he wants me as a guest. It's one of those "do I, or don't I?" [laughs] Should I answer this email? I replied to him and this guy says, "I'm a pagan. I worship the gods of Greece and Rome. But I just read your little book, Supernatural, and I loved it. Will you be on my show?" So I thought, "Okay, this will be interesting." So when we do the first show, he says to me, "Now, there aren't a whole lot of people that I can have a conversation with..." And I didn't say it, but I thought, "Yeah, like really?" [laughter] We got into a conversation and for like the first 6, 7, 8 minutes of the podcast, this guy is going through Grecco-Roman religious texts that articulate the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview. "We worship these gods because they were allotted to us. We were allotted to them! And the bigger god said, 'You worship this one and not that one.'" It's this rivalry within the pantheon and it's played out on earth. So he's like, "I get it! It's the same thing in the Bible!" And he was so excited about this. And he says, "I have one question." (On this really good podcast show, I've got one question.) [laughs] He says, "If Yahweh, the God of the Bible, is the one that set up this whole system in judgment, what does he want?" It's like, "Oh, I'm so glad you asked!" I felt like Paul for a day, or at least for an hour. Because Paul goes into a city and it's like, "Look, I know that you think that if you leave your gods and you embrace Jesus as your savior—as the incarnation of the Most High—you're thinking, 'I'm just in heap-big trouble. The gods are going to come after me. I'm going to be persecuted or killed. All of this bad stuff could happen to me.'" And so Paul is like, "Let's think carefully about this. The Most High is the one who set up this arrangement, and it's the Most High who became a man and went to the cross and died for you and rose again from the dead and ascended and he nullified the authority that he at one time had given to the gods of the nations. And yes, they rebelled and they turned out to be really awful. But the same authority figure has now nullified—deauthorized—their control over you. The greatest authority now says, 'You come back home and over to my side. I'm the one in control here. I'm the greatest power.' He will protect you. He will save you. You are released from your bondage and obligation. He wants you to come home. Not only does he want you to come back into the family, he demands it." This is Paul's message. He's speaking the same language as the pagan! He knows what they're thinking because they have this shared outlook.

So the messiah is supposed to fix all of this. Getting back to the summary of the Divine Council Worldview, in simplest terms, the divine council is just the

heavenly host. But there's rebellion there. It plays out on earth in a number of ways. In the Old Testament, this is where the cosmic conflict comes in. the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview is where we get the princes of Daniel (Daniel 10). It's where we get the principalities, powers, and rulers. These are all terms of geographical dominion. It's not an accident. The *shedim* in Deuteronomy 32 that turned the hearts of the Israelites to worship themselves and other gods. It's an Akkadian term that refers to a territorial entity. This just makes sense. This is their worldview. It's the backdrop for New Testament talk about what we think of as spiritual warfare.

Did you want to chime in? Go ahead.

**DB:** A quote about the *shedim* in Deuteronomy 32 that Israel went after.

**MH:** 1 Corinthians 10, yeah.

**DB:** It's quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 in Greek from the Septuagint, which reads *diamonia*, which we translate as "demons." But that term in the Greek world, everyone knows... We think of it sometimes looking back through Christian lenses as demons like little red pitchfork things or something. But if you're in the Greek world, *diamonia* is a common term that everyone knows from texts like Plato and a lot of others. *Diamonia* are lower-tier deities or lower-tier heavenly powers that Kronos at the beginning of time separated and put over the nations. It's the same term. So in the Greek world, everybody knows those stories. That's the etiology of how all these nations got there—the origin story. So when the Greek translators of the Hebrew scriptures were translating Deuteronomy... The term only appears, I think twice, in the entire Septuagint. Maybe only once.

**MH:** Yeah, it's pretty unusual.

**DB:** It's hardly ever used, which is really important, because where it is used in Deuteronomy 32, they chose the term that Greeks would know when they hear it that these are territorial spirits. That's the term that they chose to translate Deuteronomy 32, and that's the text that Paul draws on in 1 Corinthians 10 and says, "When you're eating in temples to other deities, you're eating with *diamonia*. You're actually eating with them. And so you're not eating the Lord's Supper, you're still eating with demons. The temples are territorial, right? Any major Greco-Roman city has a different territorial deity and territorial spirits. And so it would be a common thing (and we've talked about this on the podcast multiple times, but if you haven't heard this)... It's a very common thing in the ancient world to go on temple tours. This is normally only if you're super-rich. [laughter] Poor people don't get to do this. Rich folks would go on these temple tours all over the ancient world. If you're a foreigner and you come to a city and you don't show up at one of these big festivals the city throws (which are at temples and are dedicated to deities), then you're seen as this antisocial hater! "You're screwing up our economy here. Come on, this is what we do here! Take

40:00

part." This is where we get the term (and some of you may already know this) *atheoi*, which we translate "atheist." This is where the term actually originates. Grecco-Roman people would call Jews this because they wouldn't go to the temples—at least the ones that were trying to obey Torah. There were plenty of Jews that did, but Jews that were trying to stay faithful to Torah would not go eat in these temples and they would only worship one God. Because they wouldn't worship all the other gods, they were called *atheoi*—they were against the gods.

This is the tradition that's picked up by Paul and says, "If you've been rescued by Israel's God, who is the creator of the entire cosmos, and redeemed from those gods, you do not go back in those temples and eat the food sacrificed to idols, because you're eating with demons—those territorial spirits. They're real for them." So it is a literal redemption, not figurative. They are literally coming out from under the power of that deity, and in celebration of that, the Lord's Supper—the eucharist—is celebrated in Corinth. The way Paul does that in 1 Corinthians 10 when he talks about the meal is he relates it to Exodus. He says, "We're eating the same spiritual food that our fathers ate in the wilderness and the same spiritual drink from the rock which followed them, which was Christ." And where did they just come out of? Egypt—under oppression to foreign gods. And they were delivered. And Paul says, "That's exactly what's happened to you Greeks." Same thing. You've been taken out through your baptism—through the waters—out from under the oppression of those foreign deities and under the reign of the one true, ever-living God. So that's the image. That's why you don't go back to those temples, you see? So the *diamonia* are very real, and that's the concept of demon that you actually get in Paul. It's a little bit different in the Synoptics (because back to the Genesis 6 thing), but the way "demon" is in Paul goes back to the Genesis 10-11 issue.

**MH:** You do get that vocabulary in the Gospels, but as David pointed out, there's the Genesis 6 connection. It's interesting that the other vocabulary you get in the Gospels helps sort of reinforce that point. I don't know if you've read... I think it's Waddell's study on unclean spirits. Have you ever wondered why demons are called "unclean spirits?" It's not because they make a person impure, it's because they are mixed. Think of the Levitical rules against mixing things. They were viewed as the result of a mixed heritage—human and supernatural. It's why they're called "bastard spirits" in the Dead Sea Scrolls—because that's what they are! So the vocabulary helps make this little distinction that David pointed out. It's easy for us to read right over that and not even ask the question, "Why would they call them that? What would that mean?" Because of the broader picture of the West and the way we're typically taught about angelology or demonology in church... It's filtered to us through church tradition. Typically what's done is we take all this terminology and we smash it all together into one thing. And the good guys are angels and the bad guys are demons, and that's pretty much it. It's a lot more variegated and complex, and I would say interesting and important if you're actually paying attention to the vocabulary you get in the text.

45:00

**Questioner:** I'm so excited to be here. This is awesome. By the way, I loved the "Two Swords" podcast. That was so awesome and changed my view completely. It was like, "Oh, my gosh!" [laughter] And also, I'm really digging and have dug the Leviticus podcast.

**MH:** Wow, you're a lifer, man. [laughs]

**Questioner:** I've listened to it like five times in a row, over and over again to try to soak it in.

**MH:** When Trey helped me reboot the podcast, I actually said to him, "We're going to do Leviticus real early because if it's still a podcast at the end of that, then we'll know that we actually have something." [laughter]

45:35

**Questioner:** It was really cool. A two-fer question on that:

**Should we be looking at atonement in the New Testament in light of atonement, i.e. decontamination in the Old Testament? That Jesus' blood sacrifice was a decontaminating sacrifice for us to approach and be able to be in direct relationship with God living within us? That's part one. Two (I'm just trying to clarify), as I understand it, the laws of Leviticus were for temporal relationships, i.e., the community. The sins were against God's rules for the community and they affected the community. The punishments were to protect and reimburse the community. I don't see the laws being focused on sinning against God per say as much as against the community, although the two are tied together. Obviously, we're breaking God's rules, but those rules were applied to the community. Is that because you are in the community and loyal to Yahweh so you can simply go to God and ask for forgiveness, then? Although you may have to recompense the community in some way.**

**MH:** Some of the laws are certainly proscribing direct offense against God. It's just that those sorts of laws end in either exile or the death penalty. So there certainly are laws that are pointed at a direct offense toward God himself. But having said that, I think there's a lot to be said for this community aspect and this sacred space aspect and whatnot. Dave and I were looking at each other about the atonement because this is a really big (still and probably always will be) controversial topic. I do tend to like the notion that atonement is the wiping away or decontamination of the thing that the blood is applied to—sacred space. It protects it from defilement and takes care of that problem so that the priest, in that case, can have access and all that. That's not so much the difficulty because you could say that the New Testament talk of atonement means at least that. But the question is, "What else is in the picture?" Yeah, there's more going on. Scholars like to argue about which nuances are there and which ones they're going to fight over—that kind of thing. [To David] Do you think you could

summarize that? David has his head in this because of where he's at and what he's doing. Give him the options here.

**DB:** Okay. Yeah. [laughs] I can't summarize all of atonement theory in like five minutes.

**MH:** It's just...

**DB:** It's a quagmire. Let me do it this way. I'll problematize it, that way it will sort of open it up. So traditionally... It depends on what audience we're talking to, right? In an evangelical audience, they have traditionally inherited some sort of Lutheran or Calvinistic view of atonement, which generally goes something like, "You screwed up. You're unrighteous. You need God's righteousness. He gets your unrighteousness. You get his righteousness. Game over." Well, that's not what atonement means. Does it cover those things? Yeah, it certainly deals with those things. But if that was all that atonement meant, then why do you make atonement for land? Did the grass piss off/tick off God? Why do you make it for vessels in the temple?

50:00

So atonement much be something bigger than this. I like the "decontaminate" word, like purification. "He made purification for sins," it often reads. Depending on what translations you read, it gets tricky here, too. So the idea of purification (in particular a cosmic purification)—one that goes from the top down... In the Levitical system, it's not just blood for the people's sins; it's even for the high priest himself. And that's the final offering that goes in, and then the shofar can be blown on Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement—and then it will be announced when the high priest comes out and raises his hands and announces the sins are forgiven. But that's a climactic event that incorporates all of the other things. In Protestantism, we've gotten really good at talking about dealing with personal sin and we're really bad at dealing with systemic sin. We're *really good*... And this is tied to that personal relationship stuff. Atonement is only about making you—the individual—right before God. So come down, give your life to Christ—boom—atonement. But atonement was a systemic issue. It has to do with the fact that the whole camp has been messed up. You don't just slay the goat, you send one out, too, and it bears... And it's called Azazel [laughs], so now we get into the Enoch stuff—the scapegoat. Many ancient Jews really believed in the Levitical code. And we don't know which tradition came first, actually—the Enochian or the Levitical. They believed the actual chief of demons is literally being bound to the goat and sent away. And then in Second Temple tradition, they would make sure it's gone and push it off the cliff. [laughter]

**MH:** They would!

**DB:** So some of this Pharisaic addition was not that bad. They're like, "We're going to make *sure* that thing dies!" [laughter] But it's about expelling it from the midst of the community. It's not just about the individual.

**MH:** 1 Corinthians 5.

**DB:** Yeah, 1 Corinthians 5. I'm a Paul guy so I always go back to Paul. But Paul hardly ever uses "sins" (plural)—very rarely, if ever. What he doesn't shut up about is *sin* (singular)—something that comes in at Adam's transgression. It comes in like this imperial dark cloud over the world, and with it brings death. Now, death doesn't happen just to individuals, it happens to *all things*. So the whole creation in Romans 8 is wanting to be set free, right? Not just people—the entire creation. In Romans 8, Paul says the entire creation is groaning and waiting for the revealing of the real sons of God. Why "sons of God" (plural) in Romans 8? Have you ever thought about that? Why doesn't it just say, "at the apocalypse of the Son of God"—when Jesus comes back? But it says "the sons of God" (plural), talking about all of us in Christ. Paul has this assumption that in the eschaton what the creation really needs is for righteous people to take it over. It's run by a bunch of horrible people and the creation is like, "Get rid of these stupid empires! We want the sons of God to take over!" So we forget about the systemic aspect altogether. I think that's the biggest issue with our atonement theology in evangelical Protestantism. We're really good at the individual and we're terrible with the systemic issues.

**MH:** One note and then I'll hand it back to Doug. That's important. I hope you were listening carefully. Saying that the atonement is wider than the sort of individual associations we have doesn't mean that you eliminate the individual. It just means it's bigger. Because a lot of the atonement discourse that you see on the internet (out there in the whacky Middle Earth) is like... I often get the impression that it happens just to deny the individual component. But if you were listening carefully, that's not what he was saying. It's just bigger. To say it's bigger than the individual doesn't mean that the individual thing isn't relevant or biblical or that it isn't part of biblical theology. It is. You can't have one without the other.

**DV:** I'm thinking of an analogy with the Lord's Supper. I'm sure you've heard of these churches that have a drive-through Lord's Supper, where you can get a little individual packet and drive through the window and then go home. [laughter] Seriously.

**MH:** I know you're serious, but I just...

55:00 **DV:** Why do we take the Lord's Supper? What is the Lord's Supper about? It's about taking the Lord's Supper with the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is always two things: it's always the individual and it's the Church, simultaneously. It's the blood of the covenant, so that's the atonement part of it. It's covering...

**DB:** Amen, amen, amen, amen, amen! I'm really big about the Eucharist, okay?



**DV:** And Paul gets to the atonement or the Lord's Supper right after he's just talked about eating with demons!

**DB:** That's right. Okay, this is very, very, very important. Atonement is attached to the Lord's Supper—his death, taking in the blood, taking in his body. This is the great relegator of all of mankind. When we individualize the Lord's Supper, we've killed it. The great image of the Lord's Supper is that all who come to the table—black, white, Asian, Native American, Iraqi, Russian, you-name-it, Republican, Democrat... I'm serious! ALL have to come to the table. The richest of the rich—the most powerful billionaire in the world—and the pauper living in the box have to come to the table and bow the knee to King Jesus. That is the great relegator of all of mankind. If we lose the corporate vision of the Eucharist, we have lost Christianity. I have to say that again because I know thousands of people listen to this podcast. *If you lose the corporate aspect of the Eucharist, you lose Christianity.* Soapbox over.

**Audience comment:** By the way, the Watchers are in trouble for ice cream. That's what we believe. [laughter]

**Questioner:** That's my husband. Thank you all. Dr. Heiser, I want to say this kind of on a personal note. My husband has been listening to your podcast for four years now, I think. It really has revolutionized his walk with the Lord.

**MH:** Good!

**Questioner:** Yeah, it's really been an amazing experience to watch. I kind of tease him sometimes and say, "Sometimes I hear Mike Heiser's voice more than I hear yours!" [MH laughs] So we have little arguments here and there. But I'm very, very grateful for what he's learned in the time that he's spent listening to the podcasts. It also has helped us to be more laser-focused in our understanding of faith—that it's believing loyalty in Yahweh. So that's been super-helpful for us. I might throw you a curveball here in what I'm about to bring up. We were attending a church that had a lot of influence from the Charismatic Movement and some of those more charismatic aspects, which I'm not condemning that. I just think there's got to be a little bit of balance going on in there—back to that personal relationship and the emotional experience and whatnot. It also had influence from several of the super-popular authors of the day—the "prophets" and "prophetesses." Again, not a condemnation. I don't know. When I get to heaven, I have a lot of questions. I kind of feel like at the least the church we were in (which was a fairly large movement) had a lot of the New Apostolic Reformation ideology (NAR). But I know that if I were to bring that up and try to present that, it would almost be scoffed at. It would be like, "That's not what's happening!" But my own experience was incredibly painful. Glenn actually, after hearing a couple of the episodes that you had with... what was it, Audrey?

**MH:** The first one was Holly... Oh, are you talking about the NAR or Fern and Audrey?

**Questioner:** Fern and Audrey. Oh, sorry... there was something about them, too.

**MH:** There was one overlap because we did a Fern and Audrey episode when Beth was on the podcast and she came out of that tradition, so that might be why you're mixing them up.

1:00:00

**Questioner:** Okay. He actually said, "Honey, I think this is what's been happening to you! This is what you're under." We're not with that church anymore; we needed to leave. But I found that it became a very works-based kind of a thing. "If you would only come into alignment with this thinking or if you would only..." One of the things that was said just within the last year was, "Jesus is waiting on us to return." Which... I was like, "Well, he's going to wait a long time because we're a mess! If he's waiting for us to get our act together, we're in trouble—the whole world's in trouble." There's actually very little freedom in that. So my concern is that this is actually kind of a great deception that's being perpetrated upon a large aspect of the Charismatic Movement, but probably not just limited to that. That Seven Mountain Mandate idea—it's on us to present this kingdom now that's been completely conquered here on earth and return it to the Lord when he comes back, like, "Here, look what we did!" I think there's some confusion in there. I've spent about 8 months detangling from it and detoxing from the lies and things.

**So I guess my question is, do you see a lot of that, just in general—that NAR/works-based ideology? For us, we find it's kind of like, "How do we wade through this?" You feel like you're trying to nail Jello to a wall to explain it.**

*MH:* You know, I'll answer that this way. My youngest daughter had her first boyfriend a year ago. You're laughing! [laughter] She dated a guy who was the son of a local pastor. We knew that the church had some sort of charismatic orientation. It's not our tradition, but when I think "charismatic," I'm thinking like in the 70's, okay? I thought I was filling in the gaps there correctly, but it turns out that I wasn't because this particular church was very much what you're describing. And we learned that it was really exceedingly manipulative. Since my daughter was dating the pastor's son, they'd go to youth group and he'd ask her questions like, "Why aren't you smiling? You're not smiling enough. You're not happy enough. You're with me, so people are going to look at us." It was just this sort of thing. He would talk to her like he was her dad. It takes a lot for me to get really irritated, but this went on for awhile and she would dread getting a phone call or a text from this guy. It would be like half an hour later she's in tears because she's just not measuring up. So I actually had to say to my wife, "Drenna, you need to go talk to this guy, because if I do it's going to be ugly. It's just not going to go well." It pushed all the buttons. So what I learned through that

1:05:00

was that I got kinda drawn into this world, and this is just sort of another segment of what we would think of as the charismatic thing. It's not all; it's a subset. It's very performance-oriented. When you live like that and you're in that kind of environment, even if you meet the expectations then the issue is "what's next." Because something else has to separate the really spiritual people from the people where they're at now. It's just sort of starts to accrue different experiences, different outward behavior, different this or that to move up the spiritual ladder. So yes, I have seen that and it has not been good. But I know enough people within the charismatic orbit that are not that and, in fact, recognize that for what it is. So I don't know institutionally how big the NAR is. We had Mike Brown on, as well, and he's like, "Most of these people if you went into these churches and talked about NAR, they'd have no idea what you're even talking about." And I didn't doubt him when he said that. So maybe it's just people who are in power positions or maybe it's just an influential author that just gets filtered down some way. I don't know. But any sort of performance-oriented redefining of the gospel is just really dangerous. It's pernicious.

So yeah, I've seen that, but I'm not going to paint the whole movement... What I've actually seen more of... It happened today again. We had a series of interviews and one of the guys, in fact, the last person I talked to today... We spent about an hour together after we were done. He's a charismatic pastor and has a PhD in New Testament and is using *Unseen Realm* content and just basically wanted to talk about how it was helpful and he had some questions. So we spent about an hour together. This guy was representative of the kinds of churches that I seem to keep stumbling into, and that is, "Well, we're open to the gifts and so some people would call us charismatics, but the charismatics would say we're not charismatic enough. But the ones who don't like charismatics would say we're too charismatic, so there you go." You have believers who are open to these things but they don't drive the bus, and it's not performance-oriented Christianity. So I don't know what you call that. I don't know if you can stick a label on that, but it just seems there are more churches who are content with, "We're open to God doing stuff and we don't really think that we should expect God to conform to our theology, and if God wants to do this or that, He'll just do that and that's okay. But we're not going to say, 'Oh, if we see this happen, everybody needs this experience because then we'll know you're close to God.'" In other words, there's a clear recognition of the abusive part of it and they're searching for this balance. I actually see more of that than I do the other.

**Questioner:** That's very encouraging to hear because you can get so locked into just what's happening to you. I was a little bit hesitant because I don't want to condemn an entire group and say charismatics are nuts...

**MH:** I tell people (even in these groups), "I doubt everything. I'm suspicious about everything. But I'm open to anything. I'm not going to be able to parse your experience. I'm not you. How would I know? I wasn't there; I'm not you. But I want to see the fruit of it." If it's somebody I know, I'll be able to know if you're

turning this into a performance-based thing—if you're condemning other people because "now I've had this experience and you haven't." I'll know that. So my thing is that we'll look for the fruit of it and see what kind of fruit that produces.

**Questioner:** Thank you so much.

**First Questioner:** Hello again. This one's for David from Zach, another fellow podcast listener.

**MH:** Are you taking live questions by the way?

1:08:10

**Questioner:** Kind of. [laughter] We've got people from the FB group that are like, "Oh, you're there live!" So this is for Dave. It's a question about his paper on Paul's ascent and angelic torment. So get ready for this one, brother!

**What is your reasoning for regarding a seven-tiered heaven as authentically Second Temple, as opposed to a Mesopotamian three-tiered heaven, which would seem to fit the motif of standing in the council as the sign of a prophet?**

**DB:** I don't really understand the question. It assumes some sort of weird cut-off in historical reception.

**MH:** It sounds to me like, "At which level do the prophets stand?" Like, is it the third level or the seventh?

1:10:00

**DB:** In my view (and Mike, you can kick back on this), the reason why I say I don't really understand the question is because the question assumes some sort of essentialist reading of these levels of heaven—as if there's one absolute right one and then all the others are absolutely wrong, and so we look for that essential background to nail down that one vision. But in the Second Temple period... Yes, Paul is inspired and he says "seventh" there, but in the Second Temple period there's seven, there's twelve, there's three... It depends on what apocalyptic author you're reading. I have no idea how many levels of heaven there are! I don't know. I just know what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12, and I'm convinced in 2 Corinthians 12 (in that episode) that he's been to the highest. I think the rhetorical structure of that text is really important because he's talking about boasting in his weaknesses, whereas his opponents are boasting in their strengths.

The reason behind that paper I have at SBL and then did the podcast on... the reason why I found the Abrahamic tradition significant was because nowhere else in 2 Corinthians... Paul is talking about Moses earlier. He doesn't mention Abraham at all until you get to that ascent text, and then he's talking about the opponents who boast in the fact that they're "real Israelites" and "the seed of

Abraham." He's like, "I am, too!" And then he goes into all these horrible things that have happened to him instead of good things that you would boast in. "If you were the seed of Abraham and you get elected by God and given this great inheritance and I've... blah, blah, blah..." Instead of that, you have this list of horrible things that happened to him. And then, "I even made it to the seventh heaven!" And there's no trampling underfoot, because in some of these Abraham traditions with the promise of his seed... You'll find this in rabbinic commentaries on Genesis (I talk about this in the episode), where they think that the promise to Abraham in Genesis 15 is that when he's taken outside, he's literally taken up outside the world. The reason why they do that is that in Hebrew, "taken outside" can mean a lot of different things. But then the term for "look" can also mean "look down," and the rabbis will quote Proverbs 8 (when God is looking down at his creation). So they're saying he took Abraham outside the world and he looked down at the stars and he's at the heights of heaven. The idea was that he tramples underfoot the thorn (the rabbis say), which were "those in heaven whom under heaven fear them," and he calls them "the thorn." Part of that Genesis tradition of the curse—of being put under nasty powers—draws on that thorn imagery from Genesis and the curse. Because what happens in the end is you tread on the snake—you crush the head of the snake. And thorns and thistles came out in the curse.

This is all part of this fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise of this great ascent that will come with victory, and that's not what happens in 2 Corinthians 12. The opposite happens. He receives torment from this angel—from Satan. So it's sort of a reverse reading. In my reading of this text, this is a reverse reading of the tradition, saying "What you would normally boast in to exalt yourself, I'm actually saying that I've been there and I've heard the unutterable words and I've received torment." So it's like, even if you're at the highest heavens, it doesn't matter. What matters is suffering with Christ—being with Christ in his infirmities. It's not the ascending to heaven that you want to get to. Like, "I'm higher than all of you." It's like, "No, I'm coming down and I'm serving you and I'm dying for you. I'm not boasting of my position over you and lording it over you." He's like, "I didn't ask for a dime from you." I think the tradition is sort of not even important for Paul so much. I think it is because he thinks it really happened. I think it probably happened, but I don't know what it means. [laughs] I have no idea what it means.

So the levels of heaven thing I'm not sure is that important rhetorically for what he's doing in that text. I don't want to get carried away too far into the details because then I'll lose the rhetorical context. So if you ask me, "What level is what?" Phhhhh.... Heck if I know! The apocalypses say tons of different things.

**MH:** I would agree with that. First of all, I think the question sort of misunderstands the three-tiered cosmology because the three-tiered cosmology is the heavens, the earth, and then what's under the earth. There's only one heaven thing there. The three doesn't apply to the heavens, so you can't really

contrast it with the seven. And I would agree because you do get these mixed numbers. I think the point of all the numbers is whoever is speaking has been to the very highest level. In other words, they are actually in the presence of God. I think that's the import of it, and the way you describe being in the very presence of God might vary. But I don't view it as a contradiction to the three-tiered cosmology because there's a disconnect there.

1:15:00 **DB:** I forgot one point there, and I think I made it in the podcast, but just for the sake of the question... There are some scholars who have bought the thesis of Paula Gooder, who is a UK scholar on Paul, who in her monograph argued... It's actually titled *Only the Third Heaven?* Like it's a failed ascent. He didn't make it all the way up... because there's different layers of the heavens... And so in the apocalypses... And she's an expert on this stuff. She thinks he didn't make it all the way up and that's why he's treating it as a failed ascent, like, "I didn't make it... I'm a failed..." He's taking the persona of the lowly failed one, "yet in my weakness I boast." I don't buy that, though, and there are some scholars who don't buy that. I think the rhetoric only punches the hardest if he did make it all the way and still he was tormented. You know what I'm saying? So I think that's the point of it, there. I think I said "seven" earlier and I meant "three." [laughs] See, that's how many different levels there are in Jewish apocalyptic—trust me. If you go down that rabbit hole, oh my goodness...

1:16:00 **Questioner:** Hello, I'm Kitty. I just have one simple question.

**I've heard you talk about the fact that the future of the church is going to be different from what we have today and I wanted to know what you see as the future of the church. I think you said that you don't see how it can go on the way it is today.**

**MH:** [To panel] You know what I'm thinking don't you? [laughs] If you want to go there, just tap me on the shoulder. [laughter]

I say that because I think our culture is transitioning from a post-Christian culture to an anti-Christian culture. I think the culture is descending into tribalism. The reverse mirror image of some of the stuff you talk to with community... everywhere you see... The major forces that capture the hearts and minds of the masses are encouraging this process of disintegration and tribalism. We don't really need to get into speculating as to how this is going to work but it doesn't stretch my imagination to think that whether the trajectory makes sense or not, Christians are going to become the focus of a lot of anger. The roads to that point can be quite diverse and I think they will be diverse, but I don't think it's a stretch to think that Christians in 10, 20, or 30 years ago are going to be monitored because of hate speech laws and how points of Christian ethics might contradict the cultural consensus. In days gone past, it was okay if you disagreed, as long as you were tolerant of the other side. If you lived-and-let-live you were allowed to sort of have a voice there. That's going away. It's no longer sufficient to be

tolerant and allow someone to have a disagreement. Now we have to either celebrate evil or we're in trouble—or someone's going to manufacture a reason to demonize something it is, either doctrinally or ethically, that we think is important. Even if people don't understand it, in years gone by it was okay... "You Christians are kind of nutty, but hey, you do good things and we'll leave you alone and we're glad you're here." There's a shift going on there. If you doubt this, I would suggest you read a small book. The author's name escapes me [Mary Eberstadt], but I read it a few months ago. It's called *Dangerous to Believe*. What's really alarming in the book is part of the book goes through how one of the major cultural forces for good (i.e., Catholic Social Services) has been directly attacked on a number of fronts and in a number of ways. When you start thinking about the reach of Catholic Social Services and the amount of good things that an agency like that does, to have people say, "I want it to die and I want it to suffer and go away. I don't care how much suffering it relieves..." You're in a bad place if you're doing stuff like that. So the author of the book goes through some legal cases where they've been targeted. And they're not the only example. The book is just *filled* with examples of this.

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So I see a cultural shift coming. When I think of that, I do believe that we're going to have to (and I wish we would start now) reimagine how we're going to do what we're supposed to do in terms of the Great Commission without things like buildings, without tax exemption, without the freedom to post what we think on the internet or to use the internet for evangelism. How do we do what we're supposed to do if that goes away or it comes at the cost of monitoring and tweaking? We're going to have these decisions to make. We're going to have people in our congregations that train for years and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to become doctors and nurses and PA's and we're going to wind up in a cultural situation where you must perform an abortion to have a job! Well, then what? How does that person get out of debt? You're going to have people lose their jobs. Right now we talk about the baker and all that stuff—baking the cake for a homosexual couple. Should she say "who cares" or not? That's one example that people can disagree about, but there are going to be added examples. There are going to be other things that go in that bucket, where people are going to lose their livelihoods. And the Church as a community ought to be the place that pays that person's rent, finds that person a job. This is what community does, or at least it's supposed to. But there are a number of obstacles to that. There are so many rabbit trails I could go down on this because, again, I just think that the Church is ultimately going to have to get out of the real estate business. The Church is going to have to start reimaging what community is. It's going to have to start being creative. One thing we could really do is to encourage people in our congregations to make money—to be entrepreneurs. Because you know what entrepreneurs do? They give people jobs! They hire people. So somebody in your congregation loses a job because of some point of their Christianity. Now you have somebody who can hire them. We look out for each other. But you need people with resources. You need people who know how to manage resources. You've got to have people who know how to manage

people. You just need multiple skill sets in the community that don't think of the community as "well, this is where I apply my skills part-time" like a hobbyist. They ought to be thinking, "This is where I apply my skills all the time. It's transformative within a particular community. This plays out in all sorts of areas.

Greg, I don't know if you want to get in on this. Greg and I have had... Let me just tell you how we sort of got linked. Greg had followed my work sort of at a distance without really identifying yourself for years, and eventually he sort of came out of the woodwork and helped me do some things. That partnership and that friendship has grown. We had a conversation one day after he had just read my second novel. In the novel, there are a group of believers who are in this situation before it becomes kind of a global crisis, but they're forward-thinking. They have resources and they're using them very strategically to do things that need to be done that are really hard or that churches typically don't want to touch with a ten-foot pole. So they're driven to do this. He had just read this and we were talking about this and I said, "Hey, have you ever wondered how we would do ministry if Christians aren't allowed to have domain names and we can't use the internet or we're censored or we're blocks?" I gave him a couple scenarios. I'm a technological primitive here. This is his world. What he does for fun is read Google's patents. Literally, that's what he does! I'll never forget your answer. He goes, "Oh yeah, we've thought about it. I have a 130-page document on exactly what we would do the day that happens." And this is the phrase you said: "When that happens, we're going to throw a switch and we will infect the web." And I said, "That's all I had to hear. I'm in! I'm just *in*." So I don't know if you want to elaborate on any of that.

**GO:** Thanks, Mike. Yeah, some of us do have a calling to think about those things long-term and what it will look like. We sat down and we started praying and then we started writing and figuring out what Google is doing, what Facebook is doing. It's not so much about what the government's doing, at least here yet. It's really the businesses. It's the corporatocracy that's doing these things. So we've thought about what happens when it becomes illegal because we are "haters" to own hosting—so you don't have the ability to host a website online. What happens when it becomes illegal for you to own a domain name? How do you handle that? Or a DNS server, which is a little more technical, but when you type in something like "allaboutgod.com" or "miqlat.org," it's what actually reconciles that entry to the actual IP address and sends it to the right website. So what happens when those things happen? We've thought about all of those things and we've planned it. We even thought about it from the worst-case scenario, which is actually... The best-case scenario is there's a Pretrib rapture and we're not here, right? [laughter] That's the best-case scenario. But from our scenario, looking at worst-cast scenario, which is what I think about. I think the worst case is a Pretrib rapture because I want the people that are saved during the tribulation to be able to infect the web. Part of infecting the web is actually all of these databases of websites (so people use wordpress and cms's and everything else)... We're providing them free SCO, free hosting, free domain

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names, all of these things for free in exchange that they will put the gospel on their website, whether it's Christian business or ministry or anything else. Then if something were to happen and either the organization that is providing this (and it's not just one, it's several) were taken out in some way or put in jail or executed or raptured, whatever the case is (and I don't know), how would we handle that? So you need an unmanned solution that is capable of running at least seven years (if it's a seven-year tribulation). [laughter] Some people say it's a three-and-a-half, right? You also need money that funds this. How do you create a financial trust to fund this? How do you use the latest block chain technology or technology similar to that to decentralize these things? How do you actually take these things and plant them in a place where the antichrist does not have power? Like it talks about in Daniel 11:41, it's talking about him and it says he doesn't have power over Edom, Ammon, or the people of Moab. [chatter] Whatever the case is with all of these things, we don't know. I subscribe to the "I have no idea what's going to happen in eschatology" thing. I don't know. All I can do is pray for the best and plan for the worst. And we are planning for the worst and we are intentional about it, and we have been since 2006 with this document. So we are executing on it.

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**MH:** You would say, though (just so that everybody understands), based on discussions we've had in the past, the eschatological element you're using as an illustration. What he's proposing and what they are noodling (can I use the word "noodle" or is that a Pennsylvania Dutch thing?) isn't tied to any eschatology. If something happens tomorrow or ten years from now where it creates these problems, you have to have some mechanism to provide some sort of solution. It's just one of these things where you try to imagine... Whether you link the imagination with some sort of eschatological system or not is incidental and ultimately unimportant because we could wake up a year from now and the eschatological stuff that maybe is expected by a lot of popular Christianity or different perspectives of it either turns out to be a myth or a fairy tale or has no relationship to it at all, but you're still in that situation. So the technological end is just one example of this. We are becoming so technologically dependent, it would honestly freak people out if they were cut off from some of these things. What would you do if your phone didn't work and you couldn't do this or you couldn't use that? You're going to survive, but the question is, the more we get hooked into this kind of stuff in our personal lives and the more we have our churches hooked into it, it's going to really freak people out. But the problem is bigger than that. It's not just technology. It's freedom of expression. It's being the target of tribalistic tendencies. Regardless of what area it manifests in your mind, when I think about what the future of the Church is, I think we're really headed for some serious problems. They may be widespread targeting of what Greg thinks about with the technological stuff. It might just be a financial hit, like removing tax exemption. There are just going to be things that happen to the Church that are going to force us to do what we do in entirely different ways.

Now, there's a flip-side to this coin. I don't want to sign up for hardship for the Church, but I actually think it would have a positive effect. The Church has historically been no stranger to persecution. Who are we that we think... We have these thoughts in the West because we're comfortable... I've said on a number of shows that I basically think the church that's persecuted now and the church in the Third World is at some point going to save our butts because they have been there and done that. They know exactly how to function. And not only how to survive, they know how to flourish. God blesses them in persecution. We think the Church is dying because we're thinking about the West! "The churches over in the UK are just museums now" or whatever. And that's not true! In those churches, there's a remnant. There's a remnant in all of these places. In the Third World, even though you can't see it because nobody holds a microphone or puts a video camera in front of it, the church is growing by leaps and bounds. It's flourishing. It's a powerful force. So we have this very insular look and it creates these insecurities and conspiratorial thinking and all this kind of stuff. And I'll grant you, there are some serious things that could happen, but it's not the end of the Church. It's never been the end of the Church. God is going to find a way and it's going to be through individual Christians. I personally think it's a good thing. The state is not going to save us. That is the kingdom of the world. The state is not the solution. I'm also willing to say that institutional Christianity is not the solution. I think it's been thoroughly compromised and permeated by all sorts of garbage. In every denomination—Protestant, Catholic, whatever—it's all got problems. Do you know what the solution is? The solution is individual Christians and the formation of Christian communities that are actually doing their job. That's the solution. That can bubble up within existing structures and communities and denominations. It's just going to take a new round of, "Okay, we really need to be serious. We need to be Christians in the context of whatever it is—persecution or not. We have these wonderful examples historical. We have wonderful contemporary examples of the Church under persecution. They have done the job. We're going to have to rethink who we are. All sorts of battles are going to have to take place. It's going to be rough.

**DB:** With all due respect, this is a Mike Heiser event, but I am going to push back a little bit.

**MH:** Go ahead.

**DB:** I love you.

**MH:** He's the optimist and I'm the pessimist.

**DB:** No, that's not it at all, actually.

**MH:** All right, go ahead.

**DB:** He's downing tradition all the time, so I'm going to come back and throw it in his face a little bit.

**MH:** It's not a bad thing.

**DB:** I think the answer isn't that Christianity needs to figure out a different way to operate with... No, I don't agree with any of that. I think Christianity needs to remember what it is.

**MH:** Yeah, we need to remember who we are.

**DB:** That means everything... This is the basis of the Radical Orthodoxy movement, by the way. Everything that we need to challenge every structure in the world to represent the crucified Christ in the present evil age is already in the orthodox Christian faith—every tool we need. We just have to use it and know it and understand it.

**MH:** And be willing to suffer.

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**DB:** I'm getting there. There are two things we need to remember. To start with, the Apostles' Creed and your baptism. I say this for a reason. The Apostles' Creed... If you don't say it in your church, start doing it. This is what every Christian believed for all time. Start saying it. If you don't know what it is, go online. Google. You have it on your phone. Look it up. "We believe in *one* holy catholic and apostolic church." That doesn't mean Roman Catholic, you know. My Roman Catholic buddies would argue with me over this. [laughs] "Catholic" just means universal. We believe in one universal apostolic church, planted by the apostles, and it's universal. It is not American. It is not white. It isn't black. It isn't anything other than the *Universal Church*. I love this because I see "Kingdom Obsessed" over here, and I love that. I love that there's all these nations represented here. I want to see *every* nation represented here! The idea is that we have to remember that. So when we think about, "Oh, what's going to happen with the Church?" Normally, as Americans when we ask that question we think, "Some of our freedoms are going to be taken away! Oh, no!!!!" And people freak out! While people a few hundred miles away are getting killed. What about Libyan Christians? What about Christians who have been Christians hundreds of years longer than America has existed saying liturgies and wearing things that most American Protestants would think they're Muslim! But they're singing liturgies that are *hundreds* of years old. They gave us Christianity, not the other way around. We ask questions about, "What are we going to do?" Normally, that's an American-centric question in this question, and it's jacked-up because it forgets the rest of the world Church and how the world Church is suffering elsewhere. "Oh no, they're going to take another freedom away!" Cry me a river! I'll send you a box of Kleenex, okay? People are dying. Do we actually believe in one universal Church or not?

Do you remember your baptism—that's the second part. Do you remember your baptism? "Remember your baptism," the apostles say. "Remember your baptism." Why do they keep saying that? Because what did baptism symbolize? Not symbolize—what is the reality? "Baptized unto death and raised to walk in newness of life. To live is Christ and to die is gain." My preacher's heart is coming out. But this is important. This is important to remember your baptism. What did you sign up for? You did not sign up for the government to mollycoddle you. You signed up for crucifixion. If you don't like that, there's the door! That's what Christians have to say. Look, it's going to tick people off and make them unhappy, but we don't know who the Christians are! I struggle with my faith all the time. I'm putting my cards on the table. All the time, every day I struggle. Sometimes I wake up and say, "Is there even a God?" We need to have something discernably Christian. What I think the Catholic tradition does, the Orthodox tradition does, the Episcopal tradition does, the High Churches do, is they preserve those creeds and those liturgies from ancient times so that we remember them. So they're not the enemy. If they proclaim Jesus is the Lord of the world, they are not your enemy. You are fighting the wrong people. If you're tract-bombing Catholics, you are the problem. We have a much, much bigger fish to fry—much bigger. That's my little pro-Catholic/pro-Orthodox soapbox there.

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**Questioner:** Thanks for having me. My name is Ivory and my initial question was going to involve some of the things you said in your book. I'm new to your *Unseen Realm*, so have been just listening to it for the past couple of months.

**I was going to ask about the demons—the offspring of the angels and the women. It's my understanding that you're saying that the Bible says that they are human, yet I guess my basic question is do they, or have they had... The Israelites are told to kill them all. Is there evidence that they had the opportunity to accept Christ in their depravity? You had women and children and all of those, and I haven't gotten far enough to know whether or not that occurred for them, as well, because they seem to be (as you said) bastards. They're not from heaven originally and they are not really basically from earth.**

**MH:** Yeah...

**DV:** Before you answer that, I was thinking about this earlier because it's related to this. You might want to have a point of clarification for people because you were talking about demons earlier and I think this gets confusing because we use the same word for two totally different types of entities. [To Mike] You were talking about one type of entity [to David] and you were talking about a totally different type. I think that gets lost on people. So in your answer, if you could help to clarify that, I think that will be helpful.

**MH:** I know what you mean by "accepting Christ," even though that's anachronistic. Do they have an opportunity to become believers? I think if we take the Rahab incident, where she says, "We (not just the people of her town, but all of this) have heard about what your God has done to the Egyptians and all that stuff." I would have to say, that they could have decided that the God of Israel was the God of gods and made a decision and switched their loyalties. We know there are other instances where Gentiles do this. My mind always goes to Naaman. It's a curiosity to me that when Jesus pulls two examples of faith out of his hat, as it were, it's Naaman and the widow of Zarephath. Like, what's that? They're both pagans! But they respond correctly to the little bit of revelation that they have come across or that has been given to them Providentially. And that's what God wants. He wants loyalty. He wants believing loyalty. Naaman is never going to read Torah. He's never going to do a Jewish festival. He's never going to be part of the calendar. He's never going to observe the Sabbath. He doesn't know about any of this stuff! He's going to go back to Syria, but he knows the one essential thing: "I know now that Yahweh is the God of all gods and I will not sacrifice to any other god." He has made his decision. If it's true and we can take the conquest narrative and the element that the whole area has heard about what happened at Egypt and the people coming out and the Red Sea... They had a chance to make a decision as to which god to follow.

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The Nephilim stuff... I actually got this question in a conversation earlier today. It was a conversation that was sort of laced with sciency talk (species and all this sort of stuff). I don't believe that the early chapters of Genesis or any part of the Bible was given to provide us with scientific knowledge. When he tapped someone living in the second millennium B.C. and prompted them to write something in a book that would become part of the Bible, if God intended that this material (the product of the person that he chose) was to satisfy 21st Century medical scientific knowledge, then God made a really bad choice because that guy doesn't know anything. By definition, I don't think scripture even asks these questions. So for us to try to answer these questions automatically, by default, puts us in the area of speculation. I don't know if... In *Unseen Realm* I say there's essentially two ways to take the Genesis 6 thing and still honor the supernatural flavor of it, rather than just denying the supernatural intent of what's being described there. One of those is this literal cohabitation. For the sake of the discussion let's just go with that. I don't know how that worked! I'm not a deity. I'm not an elohim. So I don't really feel like I have the authority to talk about what a deity can and cannot do. I have no idea. Frankly, neither does anybody else. If you really believe in the intelligent... that the spiritual world has intelligent beings with personality, abilities, capabilities and whatever and they intersect with our world (in other words, a biblical worldview), the Bible doesn't give you the necessary information to know how things happened. You might as well ask, "How did the Virgin Birth work? Can I have a scientific explanation?" I know there are people who try this, but that just isn't the point. I don't know how it worked. I don't know how God becomes a man. I don't know how miracles are done. I don't know how the Virgin Birth... I don't know how any of this works because I'm not a

god. I'm not a deity. I'm not an *elohim*. I have no idea. What I do know is that at the very least what this material is trying to communicate is supernatural rebellion and conflict that involves the lives of the people on earth, the destruction of the people of God, and an impediment to God getting what he wants. And that is a people and a land, and to bring back the nations and all the stuff we read about later on. This is an obstacle. There's conflict and rebellion, both in the spiritual world and in the human world. I can't parse how that works. Now, it's true that Arba (one of the Anakim) is called an *adam* (the word for a man). You have at least one of the groups called *om* (people)—a people group. That actually doesn't help much because the two angels at Sodom and Gomorrah are also called *adam* but they're angels.

**DB:** They're actually called *ish*.

**MH:** Well, they're still a man. It's "human" vocabulary. People have tried to distinguish these terms, and good luck with that.

**DB:** I'm doing it, baby. [laughter]

**MH:** I know you're doing it. It's just that at the very least, these aren't terms that map over to discussions about genetics and species and all this sort of stuff—in other words, to be able to explain satisfactorily what is going on so that the modern scientific mind is satisfied. That's my take on it. I just don't think that scripture was intended to provide that kind of information or precision. So the ultimate answer is, "I don't know what's going on here." I'm content if what's being described... Like I said in *Unseen Realm*, the alternative is the mythic view, and that is that the language of sexual cohabitation, and in genealogy and lineage is use specifically to communicate the idea that there are supernatural forces rising up and using human population groups to destroy the people of God. If I get to heaven and I find out that's what the language really meant, I'm okay with that. I just don't know. I have no idea.

**DB:** There is one important point besides the ontological point. What I mean by "ontological" is how we understand those beings in reality or what is their reality outside of the ancient description. What we do get is the unique theology in the Hebrew telling of this story, and that's what we need to zoom in really carefully on. If these myths exist outside the Bible (which they do, hundreds of years before the Hebrews got them and after—Greeks are very similar)... If you've listened to Mike, I'm sure you know these sorts of mythical archetypes are across the Mediterranean. You could say the angels that sinned are down in Tartarus (in 2 Peter and Jude) that do this, and that's where the Titans are in Greek mythology. It maps well onto that myth.

But the point was, what happened in Genesis? The earth was filled with wickedness and violence. That's not the cause of the flood in those other stories. In those other stories, that's not the cause. You get in Enoch what Mike has

expanded on multiple times. There's a very important thing: all this secret, heavenly wisdom they teach them. You know what one of the things is that the angels taught them, according to the Enochic tradition? How to make swords and spears and weapons and armor to fight and kill each other. That was one of the things the "fallen ones" taught the human beings. And so these are etiologies—these are origin stories for what you see in Genesis 6. Right after this cohabitation happens, the earth is filled with wickedness and violence. This is Enoch's way of explaining that, and that is the dominant reading in New Testament/Jewish culture. That's the dominant interpretation of that text, even from urbane, sophisticated Jews in Alexandria to apocalyptically-minded Palestinians under the Roman Empire. It's a very common view. Those particular ethical instances and theological differences we have to pay attention to because it gives us the early Christian view of how they saw violence. Why is Jesus never fighting back? Why is Paul saying things like, "Never seek to avenge yourself?" He uses the same term that he's going to use in Romans 12 for the government in Romans 13. He says, "Brothers (meaning Christians), never seek to avenge yourselves. Those government people are the avengers." So those ethics are rooted in these stories. We have to be careful not to... Again, I think it's the same as that level-of-heaven question, because we can get so caught up in, "Yes, but were the demons like *this*?" you know, and forget what happened in the story. So that's my little caveat.

**MH:** The chaos element is a big deal. A Babylonian would think, "This is wonderful; it brought civilization and order. We're magnificent, aren't we?" The Judeo-Christian version of that is, no not so much. This was a disaster. So I agree. If you start looking at the trees and you forget the forest, it can be a little bit distracting.

**Questioner:** Hello. I want to thank you, Mike. I've had the opportunity to just become acquainted with your work in the last couple of weeks. In a nutshell here, my dad passed away three years ago and both my mom and my dad survived WWII. My mom was in a concentration camp for four years. She dug the hole that allowed her and 21 other people to escape. Eleven of those were caught and ten were not caught. Of those ten, four were my family. It's just in the last three years since my dad passed that I've found myself wanting more out of my Christian faith. That set me on this really strange Hebraic Roots Movement journey. I wanted to preface my question by just introducing myself to you a little bit.

**But my question is more of a personal note. A) Have you guys ever been invited to a Messianic Jewish congregation or experienced that? And with regard to the divine appointments that I read about in the Old Testament, why wouldn't modern day believers want to be put onto or accept the idea of being put on a Hebrew calendar? As we all know, Jesus was not born December 25. But Jesus (Yeshua), being a Jew also followed and celebrated and acknowledged all of the festivals. I don't know how to**

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**formulate my question other than to say, why wouldn't we want to consider exploring that?**

**MH:** Yeah, I've been in a Messianic Jewish congregation four times. I have a friend in Tacoma who... No, it's not Mark Biltz' congregation; it's much smaller than that. I also have friends who are pastors/ministers of Messianic congregations. I haven't been to their particular ones, but I've been in this other one four times. So yeah, I don't feel uncomfortable in that at all.

I actually kind of wish that our church would follow the Jewish calendar. I just think it's kind of neat. I don't have anything against the liturgical calendar of Christian traditions. I know there are historical reasons where the two of those have been in good relationship and not-so-good relationship. I think if you see resistance now, it may just be sort of fear of the unfamiliar. I mean, you might find somebody... I don't know if you've had this experience, Dave, where you might find somebody who just doesn't want to do that for some less-than-noble reason, but I haven't really run into that. To me, I don't think it's something that we have to deny this one tradition over here and this one calendar in order to do this one over here. Look at your churches in the New Testament. They're mixed congregations. Granted, we don't have a lot of the traditions then that we do now. We don't have a lot of the calendar issues. Those things came about from trying to calculate the time of Easter and Passover and all that kind of stuff, then doing the retro-version to get the birth of Jesus. There are historical reasons for all of this. To me, all of these things are good because they jar our memories to think about important things. They bend our minds toward things that we need to meditate upon. They sort of jolt us out of the everyday world and remind us of cycles of time and who's in control of history and human destiny and all this sort of thing. I think the liturgical Christian calendars certainly do that. I think the Israelite calendar helps us to think about the roots of what we're doing here as New Testament Christians—this is our heritage. So I don't really view any of it negatively, but I know people take sides on it. That's what I would say to that, anyway.

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**Questioner:** First of all, thank you to all of you. This has been so enlightening. I'm Sheila. My question is, how did this level of understanding of angels that you do so well and the unseen realm and angels... How did that escape so many Christians (like me)? I'm a theologian. I study all time. I've been to seminary. I never saw it in this light. For a new Christian or an old Christian like myself (experienced, been in the church for so many years), when you quote scripture from the Old Testament through the prophets, there's a lot of metaphor and, of course, a lot of prophecy. As a new believer, that can be real confusing. Like, are we speaking of metaphor right now or are we talking about prophecy? "No, that's a loaded question, so don't go real deep in there." But if I were a brand-new Christian and didn't read your books and wasn't exposed to it, how do we as leaders in the church and as laypeople get this out?



**MH:** I think we need to realize ourselves and then help the people in church under our care understand that the biblical writers are communicating in all the ways that we communicate. When we speak to another person, there's no assumption between the two people engaged in the conversation that every word that comes out of each other's mouth should be interpreted as the immediate, most literal kind of meaning—that that should be attached to each word. We just don't think that way. We use expressions, we use metaphor, we use colorful language, we use any number of figures of speech. We can pick up on that because we share the same cultural context and the same language context. But the important point is that... I always think of Dax the Destroyer, if you've seen Guardians of the Galaxy—the guy who can't understand metaphor. That's how we teach people to read the Bible. “Do Bible study like Dax the Destroyer, where everything is the most literal think you can think of and conceive of and that's what is meant by that.” Again, the absurdity of it is well-illustrated in the movie and, of course, if you read the comics or whatever. We just don't communicate that way. So why would we teach people to not think about what they're reading in the Bible the same way that we communicate, when all of these things are on the table? All of these possibilities are on the table. It's not just this literal one-to-one correspondence—the most literal thing. I know there are reasons why for generations Christians have been taught to do that. It's an overreaction to critical methodology and critical study of the Bible. We think by training people to think in the most literalistic way that that is the antidote to some of the problems on this side. But that's not the case. What we've actually taught people to do is make the Bible sort of an unreadable thing. So I would say that's a really important step. It's actually a really simple one. Just assume the writers of scripture could be using any kind of mode of communication that we normally do in our everyday language or our everyday communication with people.

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Now, to pick up what a biblical writer is laying down, what we don't have is we don't have the shared context. We don't have the shared cultural context and there are some language issues here that we'll miss if we can only read the English Bible. Our English translations are good. Basically, every committee translation that you can name or use... they did a good job. No translation is perfect. They're all going to have strengths and weaknesses. But they're all going to miss things that if you have a little bit of ability to drill down beneath the English, you'd pick up a few more bread crumbs. So getting some ability to do that would help. I often tell people, “Look, we would be better off if we read the Bible like it was fiction.” What I mean by that is when you read a novel, your brain just sort of clicks into place. Something goes off in your head that you know what you're reading is intentional. The writer is trying to do something to you. He's trying to make you think a thought for his own purposes. That piece of dialogue, that phrase or that word—“I bet I will see that again!” That place where something happens—“I bet I will see that again! I bet that meant something.” The way a person was dressed—“That's going to come up later on and it's going to take me from this thought to this thought to this thought.” We're aware that we

could be being misdirected because it's a novel—it's fiction. That's what novels do. And we're just tuned to read a novel quite differently than we would read a textbook or the tax form or some other kind of literature that isn't a novel.

The problem is that we read the Bible like it's a textbook. We don't read the Bible with an expectation that the writer is actually intelligently doing something to us. They're dropping things that we're supposed to notice and we're supposed to see this and the writer wants our mind to see this and think about this thing over here. And once we do that, he wants us to connect these two things to this thing over here. If we did that (if we could just train ourselves to read closely and click our brains into fiction mode) we would be more accepting, or maybe it would be more intuitive to realize that the biblical writers are actually really intelligent. They have agendas. They have purposes. "Agenda" is not a bad word. They have something they want you to think. They are guiding you, they are steering you, they are directing you. When you get tuned into that, it becomes important to notice, "Well, what does the New Testament writer do with that Old Testament verse? Old Testament writers repurpose other Old Testament books. Using cross references and looking for what scholars call intertextuality... We live in a day where we have tools like software. I work for a software company and I don't get a percentage here. But we have tools that can actually ferret that kind of thing out. You go back to David's thing on 1 Corinthians 15 and the clustering of vocabulary and the assumption that it goes back to this creation thing... No, it actually goes back over here... But he notices this because he's used to asking interpretive questions like, "I wonder not only where that vocabulary shows up elsewhere, like in the Septuagint, but I wonder if there's like four or five words that go together—they cluster together somewhere else." Because when you find stuff like that, that tells you the writer wanted you to notice that. The writer assumes that you have an intimate knowledge of this other stuff over here.

All of these things, I think, help sensitize us to kind of being in the mode of the writer and trying to recapture the cultural context of the writer, the worldview context of the writer, the literary context of the writer. What I'm getting at is that we need to think like the people who actually wrote this stuff and the people who were actually receiving this stuff originally. I like to say, "I want the Israelite living in your head. I want the first century Jew living in your head." These are simple things. They really aren't difficult. You have to sort of do it repetitively so it becomes kind of a pattern with you. It becomes a reflex in how you approach scripture. I had to learn that. I became a Christian when I was 17 and I had heard of Adam and Eve, I had heard of Noah, and I had heard of Jesus. I was tapped at that moment. So I'm like the cumulative result of five minutes a day. When you go to grad school (just ask David), it takes a whole lot more than five minutes a day because then you're crushed with material. But the reality is what's important is cumulative effect. You don't learn anything in five minutes or a day—anything that really matters, any skill. It's incremental and it's cumulative. So you get into the habit of doing these sorts of things and becoming this kind of reader. And it

2:05:00

really goes a long way. It really does. And then you start bringing tools in to help you even go further. Do you want to add anything to that anybody?

**DV:** I'll kind of address your question from a pastoral point of view because I've been teaching this stuff in our church for eight or nine years. This is kind of just a practical thought: don't begin teaching it by saying, "Hey, Zeus is real." [laughter] Find places where people already believe the worldview, because they do. An example is that I was teaching the giants to a Sunday School group and one of the guys was just not having a good time with this. He was getting angry inside about it—like there was a moral reaction to it, which I found really interesting. At some point, I finally just looked at him and said, "Man, don't you believe in Goliath?" And for whatever reason he had never thought about it." He's like, "Yeah, sure I believe in Goliath." And I'm like, "That's all I'm talking about. It's just that there were a lot more of them than him." Or take the idea of using the language of an angel. The Septuagint will sometimes translate the word *elohim* (god) into "angel." Sometimes. Not all the time, but sometimes. The point is, as a teaching method say, "Look, you already believe in angels, right?" Almost every Christian already believes in an angel. See, you can use that as a door to say, "It's translating this word here, now let's look at how this word is actually used in other places." And you can use that as a way to help people. So it's being sensitive to where people are at.

2:07:00

**Questioner:** Given the Deuteronomy 32:8 worldview, that God apportioned the nations according to the number of the sons of God... 1) Can that number of nations be quantified in that passage or within the context of scriptures so as to say how many nations there were, therefore how many sons of God were given rule over those nations? 2) Assuming that exists to this current time (that those nations are still under the rule and reign of those territorial spirits or sons of God), by what means primarily are they exercising control over those nations?

**MH:** I'll take the 70 question first. Seventy is the number of the nations because in the Masoretic Text (traditional Hebrew text of Genesis 10), which everybody agrees needs to be paired with the Babel event in Genesis 11—Deuteronomy 32 is referring back to what happens in Genesis 11... So if you take the traditional Hebrew text and you just list it out, it's 70. If you use the Septuagint, you'll actually get 72 because some of them are cut in half. That's the backdrop, by the way, of why in the Gospels when Jesus sends out disciples, he sends out 70 and some translations will have 72. It's a textual issue. Either number points back to the same passage—Genesis 10, the Table of Nations. You'll see a variance, like in study Bibles.

So you get the number of nations. Let's just go with 70 for the sake of the question. It's an assumption that the number of the sons of God are also 70 because of the language of Deuteronomy 32:8, even though it doesn't actually state that. It's also an assumption made on the basis of "sons of God" talk and

parallels in Ugaritic and Canaanite literature, where the number is put at 70. We don't actually have a biblical verse that says "70 sons of God put over the nations." That's just doing the math based upon the number of nations. The Targums do it, too.

2:10:00

That's kind of all the data that we have as far as the number. The way I would address the other part of your question is that I'm not a numerologist or anything like that, but biblical numbers are significant and they have symbolic value. They're not just to be overly literalized or only literalized. The number 40 is one of these that just occurs all the time. Things happen in forties or multiples of 7 (70, 49—the whole Jubilee thing). So I look at the number 70 and because it corresponds to the nations in Genesis 10 (which would have been the nations known to the biblical writer), I think that the numbering there really signifies exhaustive totality. In other words, that was the world as far as the biblical writer knew. And I think that's important because how does that map over to the world that God knows? The theological messaging is that if you're not Israel in the OT context, if Yahweh is not your God, then somebody else is. Every nation that isn't Israel is, by definition, under dominion or subject to another power. It doesn't matter if it's Australia or New Zealand or whatever nations that the biblical writer didn't know about.

The other way to approach that is, what about the Great Commission: "Go ye therefore into all the earth?" It's very obvious because the gospel applies in other passages, not only to the world, but to the cosmos. The real target of the Great Commission—the real target of atonement, the real target of the redemptive plan of God—is exhaustive totality. And so we don't have any reason to suspect or think that just because we only have these nations listed in Genesis 10 that the theology there doesn't apply, both in terms of evil and in terms of redemption to every nation that we know about today. It extends even beyond that in the language of atonement in the New Testament.

That's the way I parse the whole numbering issue. The Great Commission is comprehensive. I think the messaging of the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview is comprehensive in that "if Yahweh is not your God, then somebody else is." This is Yahweh's land—it's linked to the land. When we get the gospel extending out to everywhere and even to the cosmos, the whole idea is that everything that is not loyal and brought into relationship with Yahweh—an obedient, loving relationship, a saving relationship... That's what needs to happen with all of the nations. That's what God would ultimately desire. Redemption is for everyone in every place. I don't think the numbering impedes or prohibits our sense of totality when it comes to evil and good—fallenness and redemption.

**DV:** I don't know what their power and stuff like that looks like, but I do believe this: I do believe that there is something that stops their power (at least in terms of individuals), and that's the gospel. I think about something like Revelation 20 and the binding of Satan. There's a lot of people that think this is some kind of an

absolute binding. He can't do anything at all; he's in the pit of hell for 1,000 years and then he's let out. That's not what the text says. It actually says he's not allowed to deceive the nations any longer. How does that happen? How does somebody get out of deception? You get out of deception because the gospel comes and the person is released and set free by faith in Christ. I think that when that happens, you end up seeing this... It has an effect in the culture. It's not for the culture. It's not like a salvation of a nation. It's salvation of people, but the redeemed people go into that world and have an impact on other people. So the converse is when the gospel is not being preached, then the darkness encroaches again. I think that's what we're seeing in our day. My opinion is that the darkness that we're seeing in the West is the direct result of the Church's refusing to preach the gospel.

2:14:06 **Questioner: Good evening and thank you for being here. My name is Phillip and I just have one quick question. Here in the West we've been raised that our Bible is the Bible and we only go to that for directions. It's been said up here and mentioned... the Apocrypha, as well as the book of Enoch, Jubilees, and there's a few other additional writings. What are your thoughts on us as we gain this new knowledge touching in to those other writings?**

2:15:00 **MH:** For the biblical writers, they wouldn't have been new. My answer to this is actually pretty quick. We ought to read the books that biblical writers read. If we do that, we will be more adept at understanding when they drop a few bread crumbs from them—when they utilize them to make an argument or make some point. It just makes us more intelligent readers of scripture. I realize people talk about Enoch and whether it should be in the Bible or not. To me, the question doesn't even matter. I don't think it's canonical. If I get to heaven and God says, "Well, you missed Enoch. It should've been in." I don't really care because I'm going to read it anyway because I know that the biblical writers read it and they use it, they repurpose it. It helps them formulate some point in what they're writing. It helps them express and articulate some argument of polemic or whatever it is. It just helps them express something clearly that their audience is going to immediately know what they're doing with that. So the more I know of that, the more familiar I am with that material, I'll just become a better reader of the Bible.

**TS:** We want to thank Pastor Andrews and the Colorado Community Church again for hosting us. We want to thank everybody else for coming. Thank y'all! [applause] We also want to thank our special guests: Doug, David, and Greg. And I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.