

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 274

Q&A 34

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Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- Who are the “spiritual hosts of wickedness” that Eusebius refers to? [Time stamp: 4:10]
- Could the average Jew make the literary connections that Jesus and other New Testament writers frequently assumed in their writing? [17:05]
- What is the significance of the phrase “new gods that had come recently” from Deuteronomy 32:17? [26:10]
- Are NT Wright’s views on sacraments vs. ordinances a reflection of his own faith tradition or do they come from the text? [29:20]
- Does Matthew’s “marrying and giving in marriage” comment in Matthew 24:37-38 have anything to do with Genesis 6? [34:10]
- Can Jesus and Barabbas be likened to the two goats from the Day of Atonement? Why does the NIV call the latter “Jesus Barrabas” when other translations do not? [39:15]

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 274, our 34th Q&A. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! Finally, another Q&A. It’s about time! We’re way overdue.

MH: Yeah, we are way overdue. So, yep, we have to own that.

TS: Yeah, and I want to apologize to everybody, because at this point we’ve got so many questions that [laughs]... You know, it’s just one of those deals, that if I can’t respond to you immediately (or if at all), just know I got your questions and I have them in the queue. So just know that. That’s the best I can say as far as your chances of your question getting answered. Because we have questions going back for four years still. So we’re just loaded. We could probably just do a whole...

MH: That makes me feel so good. Great. [laughs] Thanks for telling me that.

TS: You know, it's alright. As many listeners as we have, everybody is reaching out. It's just one of those deals that I can't respond to everybody. Mike can't respond to everybody. But we have your questions. And God-willing, we'll make it through all of them. [laughs] I doubt it. Keep sending them to us.

MH: Yeah, people should know that part of the issue is that we like to cluster things. And we can get six or seven questions in an episode. That's good. But when you're asking thesis questions, well, that's not good. [laughs] We can't devote an episode to just one question, unless it... In the past, we've gotten a few that I look at and... "Yeah, that's an episode. Let's do that." But usually, you can't really do that.

TS: Yeah, and we get lots of questions that are kind of the same topic—they touch on the same issues. They're not worded exactly the same, but they're dealing with the same issue. Or they're thesis questions. All of the above. Some are more statements than questions. It's just all of the above. But nonetheless, don't let that discourage you from sending me your questions. Make them good. And especially... I'm getting a lot of Exodus questions, Mike, so I'm saving those for our Exodus Q&A. So know that. If you have a specific Exodus question as we go through Exodus, send me that question, and I'll put it on the list. Because your chances increase. Alright, Mike, anything else? Anything new with you in the world?

MH: No, nothing really. You know, I guess I could... I learned this morning of the passing of Grumpy Cat. I bring that up because my Fantasy baseball team for the Naked Bible league is the Grumpy Cats. And I'm in last place. So there might be some relationship between that. I don't know what to think. But I'm sad either way. [laughs]

TS: Man, it's been around a long time. I remember Grumpy Cat. That really got everything started back in the day as far as the memes and the videos and stuff. I don't know how we transition from Grumpy Cat to the Bible.

MH: [laughs] Naked Bible, Naked Bible league, Naked Bible Q&A. So there we go. That's my lame attempt, anyway.

TS: I hear you. Well, let's just jump into these, Mike. We have six or seven questions, as always. Our first one is going to be from Phillip. And he was reading Eusebius and came across this quote from Book Five, chapter 2:

Thus then at length the terrestrial daemons, and 'the world-rulers' that haunt the air, and the 'spiritual hosts of wickedness,' and the leader of them all in malice,

were regarded among all men as the greatest of gods; the memory also of those long dead came to be thought worthy of greater worship.

4:10

[The quotation above] lists three types of beings that were worshipped as gods: Nephilim spirits, Watchers, and spiritual hosts of wickedness. What are these spiritual hosts of wickedness? Were they human kings? I think they may also be mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:1. If these are human kings, might Isaiah 14:9 be viewed as the Rephaim specifically rather than the dead?

5:00

MH: It's hard to know what direction to take here. I look at a quote like this and similar sources for the same time period. And on one hand, it does show a little bit that this notion of connecting the powers of darkness to the concept of gods has not been entirely beaten down in Early Church thinking. In other words, it has survived... The Old Testament worldview still leaks into it. And part of the reason why you get this survival (And I would also say "and the confusion" that is arising from the question... not necessarily the question itself, but just that arises from it) has to do with the Septuagint. So I don't think any of these that are mentioned here are human kings. Because you'll see all of this kind of terminology... "World rulers"—that's going to be a term that goes back into Paul's vocabulary of cosmic geography, which is consistent with the Old Testament worldview that some of these are the gods. Others of these are disembodied spirits of the giant clans. All of them would have been referred to in the Old Testament thinking as *elohim*. *Elohim* is just a word you would use (an umbrella term you would use) for a spiritual being. The connection and the confusion results from what happens when we transition out of a Semitic or Israelite worldview into the Hellenistic period (when Greek takes over), because the Greek vocabulary is a bit different.

Now for those of you who were at or saw the first Naked Bible Conference, my presentation there had to do with the Septuagint, in part—this vocabulary of divine beings. You'll also find this in the *Angels* book, and when the *Demons* book comes out, you'll see more of it there. But in a nutshell, I don't see specifically Nephilim spirits here in Eusebius' quote. They could be there if you're taking terrestrial demons as the demons of the Gospels. That might be a connection.

But at the end of the day, we're not sure—we're not certain—what Eusebius is exactly thinking because his quotation illustrates the problem of terminology. And that is the Greek word *daimon* (or its related *daimonion*) becomes the generic word for supernatural being of any type, just like *elohim* is in the Hebrew Bible. You would use *elohim* if you're describing a resident of the spiritual world, whether it's a deity figure like Baal or the disembodied human dead (1 Samuel 28:13) or one of the sons of God put over the nations that becomes... There's a rebellious relationship there that develops *a la* Psalm 82. All of these would have been *elohim*. And *elohim* as a term itself does not differentiate. Those things

have to be differentiated in hierarchy or in some other way by virtue of other things that are said about them. You don't get the differentiation arising from a term like *elohim*. And the exact same thing is true in the Hellenistic world with *daimon* and *daimonion*. Those terms become generic. You could call anything in the spiritual world a *daimon*—good or evil, divine, or disembodied human dead. They're all *daimon*.

So you don't get the differentiation arising from the term. So it's not clear when we're reading a writer that has this term lurking around in the background (Church Fathers, for instance)... It's hard to know how precise they're being or how imprecise they're being. It may not be possible to really figure that out.

Now the major source for this, if people want this information (and I can put this in the protected folder) is J. E. Rexine. And this may be available just generally on the internet. I'm not sure anymore. It's been a while since I read this article. But the article is entitled "*Daimon* in Classical Greek Literature." And it's from the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Volume 30:3, 1985, pages 335-361. So it's a lengthy article. And this essentially deals with this issue: how *daimon* is a very elastic term. It's an umbrella term. It can be a neutral term. It can be something precise or just sort of imprecise—just general. It's hard to know what a given writer is thinking just by virtue of their use of this term. So I'm going to read a little bit about this from my *Angels* book. This question prompts... If I'm going to bring this up, I might as well share an excerpt here. I wrote this:

10:00

Ontological language (e.g., "spirits") is frequently employed and qualified with adjectives ("evil spirits") to describe demons, a term that is itself ontological. "Demon" is actually a transliteration of the Greek *daimōn* (or the related *daimonion*) which in classical Greek literature describes any supernatural being without regard to its disposition (good or evil). A *daimōn* can be a god or goddess, a lesser supernatural being, or even the disembodied spirit of a human. Consequently, *daimōn* is semantically akin to Hebrew *'elôhîm*. Gospel writers use *daimōn* in combination with descriptive phrases like "evil / unclean spirits," and so *daimōn* / *daimonion* in the New Testament nearly always point to a disembodied entity hostile to God.

Now I have a footnote here in *Angels*. There's one exception to this.

The one exception is Acts 17:18, where Gentiles (Greeks) listening to Paul opine: "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities [*daimoniōn*]." The New Testament is silent on the origin of demons.

And we don't really necessarily know what the Greeks exactly were thinking here, but they're not thinking that Paul was preaching about demons. He's preaching about some foreign deity. And so there you would have *daimon* or *daimonion* used in a neutral or positive sense, not necessarily a negative sense.

So that's the only exception to the fact that when you get to the New Testament, you can have *daimon* or *daimonion*, and it's typically used with an adjective ("evil" or "unclean").

And so in the New Testament, *daimon* or *daimonion* becomes the word of choice for any entity hostile to God. So if you're using the Septuagint as a New Testament writer, you're going to see *daimon* and *daimonion* used in the Septuagint translation for the range of things that *elohim* in Hebrew would have covered. You'll see the term used of the gods of the nations. You'll see the term used of the inhabitants of Sheol—the disembodied human dead.

So it's really hard on the other side (when we get into the Hellenistic period and beyond, when people are using this kind of terminology) how to know if they're trying to be precise or not or if they care, or are even aware of it. That's certainly possible. They're just not aware of how the nuancing of a Semitic worldview would be contained in the pages of the Hebrew Bible. I'm going to quote a little bit from the yet-to-be published *Demons* book. I have a little section: "LXX Use of Greek *daimonion* in Hebrew Bible Translation." So I wrote here:

The most significant observation with respect to LXX translation decisions is the use of *daimonion*. The lemma occurs 17 times, nine of which are found in the apocryphal (or, deuterion-canonical) books of Tobit and Baruch. The related *daimōn* is used once.

LXX use of this lemma is an important factor in understanding how the demons of the gospels were conflated [MH: they get mixed] with the gods (*ʿēlīm* or *ʿelōhīm* and *benê ʿēlīm* / *ʿelōhīm*; "gods" or "sons of God") allotted to the nations at Babel (Deut 32:8-9).

So for Hellenistic writers, they are using the same term for all of these things. So therefore, the nuancing that you get in the Hebrew Bible is lost eventually. Back to my excerpt here.

Later chapters will explain why Old Testament and later Jewish theology would distinguish between these two groups of divine beings.

So there is a distinction both in the Old Testament and later Jewish thinking, but when you get to the Hellenistic literature—the Hellenistic period—when Greek becomes dominant, that starts to become blurry or fade. Let's see...

LXX translators used *daimonion* in certain passages that speak of the sons of God allotted to the nations, and later New Testament authors use the same term for spirit entities that harm people. Consequently, two groups of sinister divine beings that have completely different origins in Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish thought get lumped together.

While this conflation is unfortunate, the vocabulary (*daimonion*) is still quite serviceable. Greek *daimōne* and *daimonion* broadly refer to a divine being (good or evil). It can also be used of divine beings at different places in the divine hierarchy or supernatural pecking order.

And here I quote from the Rexine article I just referenced. This will give you a flavor of what's going on here.

15:00

[T]he word *daimōn* reflects the dynamism of the Greek vocabulary operating throughout the various periods of Greek literature. There is, of course, no single English equivalent. It is a word of tremendous range and significance... It is a word more generalized and less personalized than *theos*. [MH: That would be "god" in Greek.]... [A]n investigation of classical Greek literature would lead to the discovery of the following meanings for *daimōnt*: (1) the use of the word to signify a god or goddess or individual gods and goddesses. This would be a rare use of the term; (2) more frequently, we would find it used of the Divine Power (the Latin *numen*). This would signify a superhuman force, impersonal in itself, but regularly belonging to a person (a god of some kind); (3) the Power controlling the destiny of individuals and then one's fortune or lot; (4) it could be further specialized as the good or evil *genius* of a person or family; (5) a more special use would reveal the *daimones* as titular deities, the "souls" of the men of the golden age of Hesiod; [MH: that would be your sons of God/giants turf] (6) general spiritual or semi-divine creatures who are less than gods, but intermediate between the gods and men (cf. Plato); (7) finally, "devil," and "bad spirit" in the Christianized sense (of course this last is not classical).

So what we have is a conflation here. So if you go back to the question about Eusebius (Who is what? What is who? How can I align this with any particular Old Testament passage?)... Good luck with that, because the terminology that's involved here is by nature broad and elastic, so there's really no way to determine what Eusebius was thinking.

TS: Mike, could you just keep reading your *Demons* book, since it won't be out for a while?

MH: [laughs] Okay. See, we could have opened the podcast with that. The reason why the *Demons* book keeps getting pushed back is now public. But I'm guessing most of our audience doesn't know it anyway, so maybe we should just skip that. [laughter] There's another book that's coming out that's pushing *Demons* into 2020. Let's just leave it at that for now.

TS: Alright. Our next question is from Lance:

17:05

How sure are we that the average Jewish person at the time of Jesus and shortly afterwards would be able to make the connections to the Tanakh in Second Temple literature that underlie both Jesus' and the Apostles' teaching? In other words, how educated was the average Jew? Was there a difference between men and women in terms of education level and exposure to texts? Is it reasonable to assume that the average person had this context in their heads? Surely most people didn't go to any type of school, with only a few entering rabbinical schools, and most only heard occasional readings of parts of the Tanakh without any exegesis thereof.

MH: Well, just a general statement here. Yeah, there would've been a distinction between men and women in this regard. Women would have had culturally less access to formal education. That's going to change in the Hellenistic and the Roman periods. That circumstance, at least, would change a little bit. Who knows how much they're going to be taking advantage of it (speaking of women now)? It does change. But I would say more particularly here, someone didn't have to go to school to have learned the content of the Tanakh. Now granted, if you were a scribe or a highly literate person, someone who maybe knew a scribe or had access to scrolls in some other way, or whatever (which is usually going to be a wealthier person that doesn't have to spend most of their day out in the fields working), yeah, then you're going to have access to reading material. You're going to be more literate. It also is partly dependent on your synagogue (if you're Jewish). I mean, we assume that all that's going on there is reading. That's not necessarily a coherent assumption. The content of the Tanakh in the synagogues... You *will* get it... There *will* be discussion. There *will* be interpretation. There *will* be conversation and debate. The rabbis aren't just going to go home and never talk to their congregants again. People are going to have questions. They're going to ask. The rabbis will get into discussions. You'll have them over for a meal or something like that. It's not as cloistered and static as you might suppose.

Now the Targums are going to be available as well. When you go to the synagogue, you probably hear both Hebrew and a Targum, or maybe the Targums. It just depends on what the rabbis (the teachers) in the place are using. There's no mass printing of anything, so when the Targums are out there, they'd have to be circulated. Well, who has to be engaged in that process? The answer is your spiritual leadership. And that's probably going to vary in terms of what you're exposed to.

20:00

When you bring the Septuagint into the picture, that's going to contribute to having a bit wider of an exposure to content and how people are talking about the Tanakh and its content (what's in it). So I would say the situation is in some respects kind of similar to today, even though we have this knowledge explosion. You can go to any bookstore in any town and get a Bible. Granted. But just having access to the material doesn't mean people are taking the opportunity. So I think in many respects, we have a lot of people who may have a lot of Bible

facts in their heads but they don't know how to connect dots. The ones who do know how to connect dots are going to get there either because their pastor models connecting dots for them... They listen to this podcast. They read one of my books. Something like that. Those are things that they do on their own. They have to take the initiative and have the motivation to do so. But you and I both know it's true that the average Christian today is not going to know a lot of this stuff. And it isn't because of literacy. It's really because of motivation.

So why do I bring that up? I bring that up because even if you don't have a lot of people either taking advantage of the access they do have or the access for some reason is limited... Even though that's true, the connections are still legit. The connections are still the connections. What the New Testament writers are doing with the Old Testament is still what they're doing. That is another way of saying that even if people aren't learning it doesn't make it untrue. I think we need to establish that fact. There is a disconnect today (even if Christians are trying to do Bible study) between the way the.... We'll call them the literate people—the academics, the scholars. There is a disconnect today between the way they look at Scripture and the way that the person in the pew in the average church does. The fact that there are exponentially more people in the pew than there are scholars does not make the less literate (less academic) perspective about Scripture correct. It doesn't make it correct at all.

So I don't think we should be connecting... I'm not saying that the questioner did this, but I think it's worth bringing up. We should not be connecting majority opinion or majority way of thinking (or not thinking) with correctness or accuracy. That would be a non sequitur conclusion to draw.

Now let's go back to the Colossians series. You might recall (if you've listened to the podcast for a good amount of time) we did an episode on Paul's signature at the end of Colossians. And I read some excerpts from a book and an article. "See what I have written with my own hand here." You recall from that episode that writing was the real litmus test of the highly educated—not so much reading, but writing. More people could read in Paul's day than could actually compose. If you've ever taken a language like Hebrew, Greek, French, German, whatever, it *is* easier to read than it is to compose. It's a different level of knowledge about the language you're trying to acquire. So we need to keep that in mind. Just because we might presume that the literate class was small, the class that could actually read and maybe write really simple things is going to be wider. It's still a wider net. So I think that needs to be factored in here, too. Now there is a book called *Ancient Literacy* (if you're into this topic, you might want to avail yourself of it) that I discovered by virtue of an article. I'm going to reference both the book (*Ancient Literacy* by William V. Harris, Harvard University Press, 1989)... And the article that I had that referenced this is by Roger Macfarlane. "Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin: The Languages of New Testament Judea." This is from *Brigham Young University Studies*, Volume 36, 1996. So it's an article about

ancient literacy. So Macfarlane, the author of the article, quotes Harris. And he says this:

The other documents that survive from the period of the Masada siege [MH: these are very simple letters] do not necessarily require extensive literacy on the part of their users, as most of these texts are brief and are restricted to a single name or phrase or alphabetic character. General literacy was probably no higher in Palestine or at Masada than in Hellenized cities of the Roman Empire, some of which [may] have achieved 20-30 percent literacy rates.

25:00

Now by our standards, that's a low literacy rate (20-30%), but it's still a significant number of the population—even for a class that has very defined socio-economic levels (let's put it that way) and less formal education. So given the circumstances, that's a pretty decent rate of literacy within the overall population. But even if you're not literate, even if you're a slave or something like that... You're in a church or in a synagogue, or whatever the circumstance is that makes you not be literate. There's no way of knowing how much effort your spiritual leaders (your rabbis, for instance) are really putting forth to get you either to listen to them as they connect dots or refer you to (maybe you can't read Hebrew but you can read Aramaic) a Targum or Septuagint or something like that. So a lot of this is dependent on your spiritual leadership. And within a family group, if you do have one person who is a reader, does that person read to other people? There's really no way to quantify that. So it's a difficult question, but I don't think we're wise at all to connect the two things in terms of, "Well, most people wouldn't have been thinking this, so it can't be right." That is a non sequitur conclusion to draw.

TS: Our next question is from Becky from Massachusetts:

26:10

The ESV reading of Deuteronomy 32:17 is "They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded." What is the significance of the phrase "new gods that had come recently" (especially the "recently" part)?

MH: Okay. Well, I will focus on this, to answer the question, but it behooves me to say that the ESV is messed up as a translation in Deuteronomy 32:17. This is why you will never see me quote it in any public presentation of my content. It's also why I got a published journal article just on this verse in a journal called *Bible Translator*. [laughs] I believe that article is in the protected folder as well. Basically, "they sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known," is a self-contradiction within the verse. They can't be "no gods" and "gods" at the same time. The ESV messes this up—probably because the translator maybe was afraid of potential polytheism or something silly like that. The phrase "no gods" there is not *elohim*. Literally it's, "They sacrificed to

demons,” not to *eloah*. That’s a singular noun. It is always singular. So in the Hebrew, there is no contradiction.

They sacrificed to demons, *not God*, to gods they sacrificed that they had never known, to new gods that had come along recently.

So ESV messes this up. Other translations get it right. In ESV, this is an anomaly within the translation.

Anyway, let’s move on to the actual question. The significance of the phrase “new gods that had come recently.” The reference here is to the Israelites’ adoption of foreign gods subsequent to their covenantal relationship with Yahweh, which began with the patriarchs (a few hundred years prior) and which was certified at Sinai. So the comment (if you think about it) is yet another retrospective assessment on the part of the writer of Deuteronomy and is, therefore, likely not Mosaic. Think about it. When did the Israelites start going after other gods besides Yahweh? Well, that was after the era of Moses. It was after the conquest. Not too far after the conquest, because we learned from the book of Judges that they start to let the people live in the land; they start to intermarry. That’s when the problems begin, and we see the evidence of that in the book of Judges. But that’s still post-Mosaic. So this is a retrospective comment that refers to gods that the Israelites (to sound like a prophet here) “went a-whoring after” subsequent to Yahweh’s covenantal relationship with the Israelites—through the patriarchs and then during the time of Moses. So any gods the Israelites decide to follow subsequent to Yahweh, the God of their fathers, was a newbie. That’s what it’s pointing to.

TS: Our next question is from Eric from Pelican Rapids, Minnesota.

29:20

I've enjoyed reading NT Wright, but one thing I can't wrap my head around is his discussions of the sacraments. I come from an American Evangelical background viewing them as "Ordinances," but I don't see anything in the New Testament that makes them more Sacramental. Am I missing something, and/or is there some Second Temple, Hebrew, or ancient Near Eastern context that makes the way other faith traditions talk about them coherent? Is Wright slipping into his own faith tradition here, and not really sticking to the text?

MH: Well, I would say he is slipping into his own faith tradition, but he would say that he’s interpreting the text correctly in the sacramental fashion. But to be honest with you, I’m in agreement with you. I don’t see anything sacramental about baptism or the Lord’s Supper, depending on what is meant.

So a lot of evangelicals who are outside of sacramental contexts will only be hearing the word “sacrament” and thinking one sort of definitional way about that

term, when there's actually more than one thing that could be meant by a term like sacrament. For example, somebody might use the term sacrament and mean a ritual act (like baptism or the Lord's Supper) that contributes in some way to salvation. In other words, "This ritual I'm doing is a sacrament in the sense that it contributes saving grace to me [or to the recipient]." That's one way that sacramental terminology is used. And if you're outside liturgical churches, the tendency is to make everything sound that way (Roman Catholic or something like that)—some other form of Christianity that you've been distanced from and may have had conversations about. And this kind of thing will leak out in the conversation. Or maybe you read a Catholic theology (or whatever theology). So this is one way that "sacrament" is used, but it's not the only way.

Someone else might use the term to speak of a ritual act (or really any spiritual practice) that assists us in sanctification. In other words, it's not about salvation; it's about sanctification. It's about growth as a Christian. I'll use an example here from my own life. When I was in graduate school... And up to this point, I had been completely out of church contexts that had any liturgy—anything like this. So we attended a number of churches once we moved to Madison. And we wound up going to a Christian Reformed church that appealed to us for a bunch of different reasons. The gospel was clear there, but they used this sacramental language. So I would often ask questions. Now the pastor at the church at the time told me, "I don't use the word sacrament (and nobody else is going to either) to say that if you do this thing, then that's going to contribute to your salvation or result in your salvation." I remember our conversation at one point. He said, "The Lord's Supper is a sacrament like reading your Bible or praying is a sacrament. It's a thing you do that helps in your growth as a Christian. It helps you become more of what you should be, as a believer." It's something God can use to assist you to become a better believer—think more Christianly—however you want to put it. So it had nothing to do with salvation. So I want to use that as an illustration to say that it's kind of hard to know what anyone really means by the term "sacrament" unless you sit down and have a conversation with them and ask them, "What do you affirm by the term and what do you deny by the term?"

And I don't know exactly how Wright is using it. I don't think he would be using it in a soteriological sense, but I don't actually know that. So I don't really know exactly what he means. I personally avoid the term, because for too many people out there it smacks of earning merit in terms of salvation, even if that's not what's meant. So I think the term is confusing. I think the term has a great potential to misdirect people or leave them in a misguided position intellectually and theologically and in the way they're thinking. So I just avoid it.

TS: Alright. Nathan has a question:

34:10

In *Unseen Realm*, Mike makes the point that the Hebrew of Genesis 6:1-4 doesn't necessitate marriage/wives but could just be an illicit sexual relationship with women. The Greek in the LXX appears to be a literal

translation of the Hebrew “going into” women. But in Matthew 24:37-38 Jesus clarifies this by saying “marrying and giving in marriage”. Where is Matthew getting this from? Enoch?

35:00

MH: I decided to take this question (some people are already thinking, “The answer to this question is on Mike’s website,” and it is) because there are going to be a lot of people in the podcast audience who haven’t looked at the website or don’t search the website. So the premise of the question is flawed, and that’s what’s exposing this tension in the question. Matthew 24 has nothing to do with Genesis 6:1-4. Matthew does not use the Septuagint of Genesis 6. He does not use the vocabulary that you’ll find in Genesis 6. So it doesn’t matter how literally... It’s a straightforward translation by the Septuagint translator, but that isn’t the question. That doesn’t matter. The question is, “Does Matthew use the vocabulary of Genesis 6?” And he doesn’t, which ought to tell us that he’s not thinking of Genesis 6. He’s also not thinking of Enoch. You can go up and get more details on this from my homepage (drmsb.com). Put in Matthew 24:6, and you’re going to find this. But I’m going to read a little bit from that post. So from my homepage:

[There’s another issue that goes along] with this assumption:

The other significant problem is that saying Matthew 24:37-38 is about a repeat of Genesis 6:1-4 requires you to ignore parts of what Matthew describes — or deliberately not see the disconnections with Genesis 6:1-4.

So not only does Matthew not use the Septuagint of Genesis 6:1-4, there are things in what Matthew does say that are *not* in Genesis 6:1-4. And you can’t just ignore that or not see it..

Here is the full list of what Matthew says will be going on when Jesus returns that was going on in the days of Noah:

- eating and drinking
- marrying and giving in marriage
- not watching / being unaware

Only one of those (conceivably, but incorrectly) could be associated with Gen 6:1-4—the “marrying and giving in marriage.” The others have no association whatsoever with the supernaturalist aspects of Genesis 6:1-4 [MH: or even any of the content of Genesis 6:1-4]. So why impose the supernatural character of Gen 6 onto what Matthew says? It’s an arbitrary decision, and one made incoherent and unsustainable by the lack of any [direct] connection to the LXX of Gen 6:1-4.

So what I mean by that is, if Matthew was really thinking about Genesis 6:1-4, firstly, he would use the vocabulary of the Septuagint for the marrying and giving

in marriage, but he doesn't. These are different terms in Matthew than they are in the Septuagint of Genesis 6. So that would be the first thing Matthew would do. He would dip into the vocabulary to telegraph to his readers of the Old Testament passage that he's thinking of. But that isn't there. He would do that. The second thing he would do... If I'm Matthew, this is what I would do. I would connect my vocabulary to what's in Genesis 6:1-4 in Greek. And I would not in my writing list things that are not in Genesis 6:1-4. So when Matthew starts adding things, that is another thing that tells you he's really not thinking about Genesis 6:1-4. Rather, what he's thinking about is more general. He's thinking about people going about their normal lives. They're eating and drinking. They're marrying and giving in marriage. Guess what? People do that. They have babies. They have grandkids. They perpetuate the species. This is the normal course of life. And when you're absorbed with the normal day-to-day life (day-to-day subsistence), you're not watching for it all to end. This is his point.

So to really make a good exegetical case that Matthew is thinking about Genesis 6:1-4, you would think he would use the vocabulary that's there, but he doesn't. And he wouldn't muddy the picture by inserting other details. So there's really no clear connection between the two passages. It's one that we read into it because of the "marrying and giving in marriage" language, but he's using vocabulary there that is not found in the Septuagint in Genesis 6:1-4.

TS: Neil has our last question:

39:15

Today in my devotional I read about Jesus and Barabbas being like the two goats from the day of Atonement. Jesus was sacrificed for the sins of the people and Barabbas was let go. The point was that the two goats had to be the same. Barabbas means "son of father" and messiah means "son of God" or "son of father." I noticed that my NIV Bible calls Barabbas "Jesus Barabbas," which makes sense in the context. Pilate asked if he should release Jesus Barabbas or Jesus, who is called messiah. My question is, why is the NIV the only version that calls him "Jesus Barabbas" and all the others just say "Barabbas"?

MH: Alright. This will be like the earlier question. I will get to the question, but I need to make a couple of comments prior to this. Barabbas really is not... (How can I say this?) The wording in the first part of the question doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. How could the different goats which had different destinies "have to be the same?" I don't understand the wording of the question in that regard. Boy... If that's what your devotional says, then I think there's a problem with your devotional. [laughs] Barabbas is not really a good analogy to the goat that is sent away, either, because that was sent away to its doom. It's sent away to the realm of Satan. And Barabbas really wasn't sent to the realm of Satan. He doesn't carry the sins of the people away. The whole first part of the question to me doesn't make a whole lot of sense, as it derives from this devotional.

But having said that (I felt like I had to say something there), let's go on the actual question now (why the NIV has Jesus Barabbas and the other ones don't). Well, the inclusion (or not) of "Jesus" with Barabbas is a text-critical issue. What the NIV is doing here is adopting a variant—a textual variant, a reading of a manuscript—where other translations don't adopt that reading. Now this will get into the weeds a little bit, but I think people will find it interesting. In approaching a question like this, I have a *Metzger's Textual Commentary* open here because that's the quickest place to go. If you're not familiar with *Metzger's Textual Commentary*, if you know a little bit of Greek (if you've had a year of Greek, let's just say), one of the Greek New Testaments that is used widely in seminary classes is the United Bible Society Greek New Testament (the UBS). When that was (I think it was the 3rd edition)... When that came out Bruce Metzger (who is one of the editors of that edition) also produced a commentary on that edition of the Greek New Testament. In that edition of the Greek New Testament, when there is a difference of opinion or an important variant reading from a manuscript, the editors adopted a lettering system (A, B, C, D) to tell the reader what level of certainty they had when including or excluding something. So if you go to Matthew 27:16 in *Metzger's Textual Commentary*, the "Jesus" part... In that part of the manuscript ("Jesus Barabbas") the "Jesus" part, is given a letter C. Here's what Metzger says as to what that sort of means to them. He gives you the thinking of the committee on this. He says:

The reading preserved today in several Greek manuscripts and early versions was known to Origen [MH: Origen is a 2nd-3rd century early church father, and he knew of manuscripts that actually included "Jesus" Barabbas. So it's known to Origen...], who declares in his commentary on the passage, "In many copies it is not stated that Barabbas was also called *Jesus*, and perhaps [the omission is] right." (Origen discloses in what follows his reason for disapproving of the reading *Jesus Barabbas*; it cannot be right, he implies, because "in the whole range of the scriptures we know that no one who is a sinner [is called] Jesus.")

So that's kind of a pastoral, homiletical thing on Origen's part. But the important part of the quotation is that Origen knew that there were some manuscripts (a handful) that actually had "Jesus Barabbas" in them. He didn't prefer those.

In a tenth century uncial manuscript (S) and in about twenty minuscule manuscripts a marginal comment states [MH: this is actually a comment that a scribe would have put in the margin]: "In many ancient copies which I have met with I found Barabbas himself likewise called 'Jesus'; that is, the question of Pilate stood there as follows, τίνα θέλετε ἀπὸ τῶν δύο ἀπολύσω ὑμῖν, Ἰησοῦν τὸν Βαραββᾶν ἢ Ἰησοῦν τὸν λεγόμενον Χριστόν; for apparently the paternal name of the robber was 'Barabbas,' which is interpreted 'Son of the teacher.' " This [comment], which is usually assigned in the manuscripts either to Anastasius bishop of Antioch (perhaps latter part of the sixth century) or to Chrysostom, is in one manuscript attributed to Origen, who may indeed be its ultimate source.

I'm going to skip to Metzger's conclusion here. He says:

45:00

A majority of the Committee was of the opinion that the original text of Matthew had the double name in both verses [MH: 16 and 17] and that Ἰησοῦν [Jesus] was deliberately suppressed in most [textual] witnesses for reverential considerations. In view of the relatively slender external support for [Jesus] Ἰησοῦν [MH: in this reading], however, it was deemed fitting to enclose the word within square brackets.

And that's what you actually see if you use the UBS Greek New Testament here. They'll put "Jesus" in brackets, so a translator (like someone working on the NIV) would look at that and say, "That's in brackets, which means the committee probably had a disagreement here. They don't feel good enough about the authenticity of "Jesus" to let it stand on its own in the text. So what should I do? Should I include this as part of the translation or not?" So the NIV translator decided to do it. He probably looked into the issue and said, "Well, it's in a number of early manuscripts. Metzger says that it might be original. Could be original. You could build a good case for that. But scribes later took it out because it just felt icky to give Barabbas the name of Jesus. So we can see them doing that to 'protect' the name of Jesus". So the NIV translator would think, "Yeah, I'll go with that. That sounds reasonable, so I'll put it in." But then you have other translators of English Bibles that would say, "Unless I have a high degree of certainty along with the editors of the Greek New Testament that we're using here for this translation, I'm not putting it in." So that's why one has it and the other doesn't. It's literally a text-critical discussion and decision.

Now I want to say something about the term "Barabbas" itself, because I think people will be interested in this. And my favorite commentary on Matthew is the one by R. T. France in the NIC series. I just like France's work. He writes this:

Barabbas ("a common name," BDAG [MH: the standard Greek lexicon for the New Testament.] 166a) is an Aramaic patronymic [MH: an Aramaic personal name], probably meaning "son of Abba" (Abba is found in rabbinic literature both as a name and as a title, "Father") or perhaps "son of a teacher (Rabban) [MH: Rabban would be like rabbi. It's a term that could actually mean teacher.];" see Schürer, 1.385, n. 138; R. E. Brown, *Death* 799–800.

So the devotional comment that Barabbas means "son of the father"... Maybe. But it could mean two other things just as legitimately. It could mean "son of Abba" (some guy named Abba). It could also mean "son of a teacher." Now France references a pretty exhaustive source on this: Raymond Brown (Father Brown), who was a Catholic New Testament scholar. He's no longer living. But he devoted his scholarly career to the life and times of Jesus. And he's produced some massive works on this. The one I'm going to quote from here is his book

The Death of the Messiah, which is overall a multi-volume work. It's just this massive work. It's Yale University Press. This is going to be from pages 798-800, where he comments on Barabbas. He says:

"Barabbas" is a patronymic, i.e., a father's name used to make a distinction among men who bear the same personal names. For instance among the many men named Jesus in 1st-cent.-ad Palestine (Josephus mentions about a dozen), the one of most interest to us would be distinguished as Jesus of/from Nazareth; and if there were several men named Jesus at Nazareth, he would be further identified as Jesus *Bariōsēph* ("son of Joseph": John 1:45; 6:42). Not infrequently only the patronymic is used in a description, e.g., an 8th-cent.-bc Bar-Rekub inscription, and the NT Bartholomew and Bartimaeus. More usual is the combination of a personal name with the patronymic: Simon Barjona (Matt 16:17); Joseph Barnabas (Acts 4:36); John and James, sons of Zebedee (Mark 1:19).

So Brown is saying that that's the typical pattern. You'll have a personal name and then some patronymic qualifier, further identification.

50:00

What was Barabbas' personal name? Lesser textual witnesses to Matt read in v. 16, in v. 17, or in both, "*Jesus* Barabbas." Is the name Jesus the original reading in either Matthean verse? Those who answer no (formerly the majority) point to the tendency of later generations to supply names for those left nameless by the NT... Moreover, the neat pattern in v. 17, "Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called Messiah," could reflect a copyist's dramatic touch to heighten the parallelism of the two figures whom Pilate faced. Those who answer yes point out that over against Mark, names are sometimes added or changed in Matt (9:9: "Matthew"; 26:3, 57: "Caiaphas").

They're different names interchanged. And they could be the patronymic; they could be the personal names. Sometimes, we just don't know.

Yet if the name Jesus did appear in the original text of Matt, why would later scribes have omitted it so that it is absent from many important [manuscripts]?... Ca. ad 250, and thus before all preserved Greek copies of Matthew, Origen (*In Matt.* 27:16–18, #121; GCS 38.255–56) argued defensively, "In many copies it is *not* stated that Barabbas was also called Jesus." He insisted that it is not proper that the name of Jesus be given to an iniquitous person; and since no sinner is ever given the name Jesus elsewhere in the Scriptures, Origen thought the name might have been added to the Matthean text by heretics. Origen's authority and attitude make it unlikely that Christian scribes of later centuries would have added "Jesus" to Barabbas' name in Matthean [manuscripts] that lacked it. Indeed they would have been encouraged to delete it as an impiety where it already appeared. Yet probably most scholars now argue for the originality of the

“Jesus Barabbas” reading in Matt, and indeed many go beyond the textual issue to assert that this represents historical tradition lacking in Mark...

A more plausible interpretation [MH: of the name... he’s not dealing here with how we got it, or whether it’s authentic or not, or original or not... now he’s talking about the interpretation, the meaning] relates “Barabbas” to “Bar-Abba” (“son of [a person named] Abba”). “Abba” appears as a personal name with frequency in the Gemara section of the Talmud (ca. ad 200–400) [MH: then he starts quoting Talmud passages]. In TalBab *Berakoth* 18B we find: “ ‘I am looking for Abba.’ They said to him, ‘There are many Abbases here.’ He said, ‘I want Abba bar Abba.’ [MH: So on and so forth. So he gives some citations for people named Abba in literature from 200-400AD, the Talmudic period, anyway.]... Of course, Aramaic *’abbā*’ means “father,” as NT authors were aware because of the usage associated with Jesus (see Mark 14:36). Accordingly some scholars think “Barabbas” did not contain a proper name but meant “son of the father.”

So we’ll wrap that up as far as Brown goes. So I thought that’s a point of curiosity to end our Q&A here. But it’s not a given. It’s far from a certainty that Barabbas means “son of the father.” It could just be a guy named Abba or “son of the teacher.” And you have to dive into some serious commentaries and probably some journal articles to ferret out what difference it makes. Referring back to France, I actually made... I have this talk I do on inspiration. And one of the talks I gave on “We need a better view of inspiration” actually gets into this issue—whether it’s authentic or not, whether it was added by a scribe or not. If you have “Jesus Barabbas” in the text, it does create some really interesting parallelisms and it actually becomes part of chiasmic structures in Matthew, which Matthew is famous for. The whole book is not only filled with chiasms, it *is* a chiasm—one huge chiasm. And the inclusion of Jesus’ name in this passage actually becomes part of one of those chiasms. So it’s kind of interesting. I think it’s very coherent to argue that Matthew did this—that it is original and it is part of a literary presentation to heighten the tension here, as France said, between these two Jesuses now in front of Pilate—that Matthew included the name deliberately just to make it that much more dramatic in the scene. But anyway, the inclusion or exclusion in an English translation is really basically a text-critical decision.

55:00

TS: Alright, Mike. That’s all the questions we have this week. We appreciate you taking the time to answer our questions. And next week, we get back into Exodus with Exodus 13.

MH: Yep. Exodus 13. The whole issue of the giving of the firstborn.

TS: Alright. Sounds good. We’re looking forward to that. We appreciate everybody who sent in their questions and Mike answering those questions. And I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.