

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 292

Q&A 35

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Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions about:

- Where the loyalty of an atheist lies, in terms of the Divine Council Worldview. [Time stamp 2:25]
- The Biblical Unitarians' view of Angel of the Lord as an agent of Yahweh. [9:50]
- What happens with the Holy Spirit when a person turns their back on God. [19:10]
- Other possibilities for authorship of James. [22:40]
- The meaning of “robbing temples” in Romans 2:21. [23:45]
- Dr. Heiser's role (or lack thereof) in translating the NET Bible. [31:00]
- Whether Genesis 4:26 could mean that people are profaning the name of the Lord instead of calling upon him. [32:10]
- The identity of the saints/holy ones in Ephesians 2:19. [36:40]
- A connection between the evil eye and the Garden of Eden incident. [42:20]

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 292: our 35th Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike. I still have not won a game in Fantasy Football.

MH: Yeah, I noticed that. But you will. It'll happen. You're not going to go through the whole year 0-whatever.

TS: It's rough. It's not as fun when you're losing, to be honest. [laughs] It's not as much fun.

MH: Yeah, I know. I got eliminated in my baseball league, so I know exactly what you're talking about.

TS: I hear you. Well, I'll tell you what *is* fun, Mike, is that our 2nd annual Naked Bible Conference is next weekend. If you can't make it, you can go to NakedBibleConference.com and livestream it. It'll be available for the next three months. You can watch it on demand. So please, please, if you're interested, go to NakedBibleConference.com. You can check out the speakers and the topics and...

MH: Yeah, if you like good content, it'll be fun.

TS: And Mike, while we're taking a break from Exodus, I get several emails about how [laughs] they don't regret voting for Exodus, but they appreciate the in-depth... [MH laughs] We probably should be doing two or three...

MH: [laughs] Are you sure?

TS: Yeah. It is what it is. But we're thankful for it.

MH: *Mea culpa.*

TS: Exactly. We'll keep chugging along. Hey, I hope you have your thinking cap on and have some good answers for us.

MH: Yeah, I hope so, too. [laughs]

TS: Are you ready? I'm ready if you're ready.

MH: Sure, absolutely. Go ahead.

TS: Our first question is from the other side of the world: Duncan in Australia. His question is:

2:25

Given that from a Divine Council viewpoint, the whole Bible is a description of spiritual warfare and faith is about defining loyalty, where does the atheism movement fit in within this model? In ancient times, there were very few atheists and existence of other gods was intuitively obvious and the nations' worship of these other gods was overt. How do these gods exert power now? Why did the way they exert power change? And where does the loyalty of the atheist lie?

MH: Honestly, I don't see how the atheist approach is coherent or matters in any of this. The atheist isn't loyal to any deity because he or she doesn't think any of them are real. So to me, they're not even on the playing board. I think the more interesting part of the question is the exertion of power here. I've actually gotten this question a lot in other Q&As when I'm out speaking—how they exert power and all that sort of stuff. So I'm going to try not to repeat a lot of that, but I'll try to give an abbreviated version of my thoughts on this.

5:00

The short version is that all we have in Scripture described to us are spheres of influence and types of influence. We also have (if you can recognize the patterning) an evil—a dark mimicking—of what the true God actually wants. What I mean by that is that we have passages like Daniel 10 and Psalm 82, where you have supernatural beings (the princes or the gods—this is part of the Deuteronomy 32 worldview) over geopolitical nations (states, empires). So that is pretty clear. It's very transparent. But we aren't given a playbook. There's no playbook here, so I'm not going to invent one. We do have common patterns of how the gods—how the divine beings who are in rebellion, who are adversarial to what God (the Most High, Yahweh) wants... If you can see the patterning, you can see where some of this stuff emerges. They want to have their own imagers. They want to move humans to image *them* rather than the true God. They want their own agenda pushed forward, and their agenda, of course, was to resist the authority of the Most High.

So how would that work out? How does it work out in Scripture? How does it work out today? Well, there's a tendency in temptation narratives where one of the powers of darkness will want to define good and evil on their own terms—terms other than the true God's terms. There's a tendency to seek autonomy, in other words, to reject the authority of the Most High rather than submission. This is a pattern. What does this look like? Well, they're going to... If you think about a supernatural being who's going to rebel against the Most High, they're pursuing their own divinity, not in the sense that they're not divine already, because they are if we're talking about supernatural beings. But for the gods, that means they rebel against the authority of the Most High. For humanity, the urge is the same. But it's facilitated by supernatural intelligence.

So the *nachash* (the serpent) goes to Adam and Eve, "Hey, do you want to be part of the divine family? Really? You want to be as God? Well, here's how." They'll get through deception... It's redefining what good and evil is, redefining what God wants, the prodding, the urge to autonomy, to reject higher authority, to pursue their own divinity on their own terms, to be more than human. God (the Most High) did want Adam and Eve to be part of his family, but now the *nachash* is getting them to pursue this, to be like God and like the gods (the other members—Genesis 3:22 is plural) in a different way, in a way that God has not outlined. So this reflects the desire to be more than human—the desire to throw off authority. We're talking in different ways because you have supernatural beings and human beings here. The pursuit of autonomy.

Another one would be the pursuit of utopia. This is seeking to reverse the judgment of Babel on their own terms and on our own terms, or only human terms. It means rejection of God's own device for restoration of Babel (that would be Israel and her Messiah). So there's this impetus to seek to rebuild a union of humanity—a one-world population—on purely human terms, and then justify it as part of the pursuit of our own divinity. ("We will be like the Most High. We will

restore Eden the way we want it to be. We'll create our own imagers, people who follow us, lock step to our agenda, our beliefs, our objects of worship, so on and so forth.") It's idolatry. All this is as old as dirt. Our modern world has technologized it. It has technologized all of it through new, modern means. We have things like transhumanism. We have this pursuit of artificial intelligence. We have synthetic biology. We want to make life forms that never existed before and they'll be better! We want to recreate Eden. We want to be more than human. We're not satisfied with our status—the way God has made us. We're not satisfied with the trajectory that God has provided for us to be like him, for us to be gods (small "g"). We're not satisfied with that. We're going to do it on our own terms. We're going to be more than we are. We're going to assert our own authority in doing this, and we're going to restore what was lost in the rebellion at Babel. Nothing has changed here. The only thing that's changed are the means to pursue these ends and, of course, the means (in our world) to market the vision, and that's just media, technology.

So the agenda has never changed. The means to the agenda has. Since the Bible is an ancient book, we don't get this technologizing talk in it, but we do get these consistent patterns (pursuit of utopia, creating our own imagers, wanting to be more than what God has made us to be, throwing off authority, the hunger for autonomy, to be as gods, all that sort of stuff). This is how it works. This is the agenda. The means to all that—the manipulation means to all that by supernatural intelligences—is what is different.

TS: Okay. Our next question is from Heath. He's studying the Biblical Unitarian movement and why they reject the Trinity.

9:50

I read a few articles today where they talk about the Angel of the Lord appearances in the Old Testament and how this angel is indeed referred to as Yahweh, but that just means he's Yahweh's agent, not that he possesses the same essence or is ontologically the same as Yahweh. They say this has to be the case because 1 John says, "No one has ever seen God at any time," as well as that God is spirit, hence our senses can't detect him.

As a follow-up to the Biblical Unitarians' arguments, I don't understand why they don't apply the same logic to regular angelic manifestations in the Old Testament, given that because angels are spirits just like Yahweh, we can't detect them with our senses either, unless they physically manifest. I found zero resources from this movement saying that we should also understand physical manifestations of angels in Scripture to mean that it was only an agent of the angel and not really the angel himself/itself. Is this sound thinking on my part?

MH: Well first of all, I have to say that "Biblical Unitarian" is an oxymoron. There's nothing biblical about Unitarianism. That doesn't mean that... It's just like the

Aryans. It doesn't mean that they're not believers. They could be believers. They could recognize Jesus as the only exclusive means of salvation and embrace that. They could still understand the gospel but get other points of theology wrong. There's that possibility. I'll hold that out for them. I'm not going to be too pejorative here. But I do think Biblical Unitarianism is an oxymoron.

What about passages where we're not talking about the angel? What about Jeremiah 1, where the Word of the Lord is identified as Yahweh Elohim? And he touches Jeremiah. This is anthropomorphic language. What about 1 Samuel 3, where the Word of the Lord (the same Word of the Lord from Jeremiah) *stands* before Samuel, as a man. Samuel is seeing this. The account says it's a vision. It uses words like "reveal." And you can't use anthropomorphic language of something that's invisible. How would you know it's standing? If you're not seeing anything, you can't use those descriptive words.

Now this happens over and over again, so it's a false dichotomy they're setting up. What about all these other passages? And even what they say about the angel isn't the case, because some of that "Word of the Lord" stuff will leak into angel passages. You can't isolate these things from one another. This is a matrix of ideas. In Genesis 48, the angel doesn't say anything. He's not representing God. This is Jacob's assessment of the events of his own life. Genesis 48:15-16, the three-stanza prayer: "May the God who did this, may the God who did that, may the Angel, may he (singular verb form) bless the boys." You go back in Jacob's life. Who is the one who did these things? It's Yahweh. But somehow Jacob feels quite free to put the angel in the mix, and then a singular verb is there. So it's not "may they bless the boys," it's "may he." Which one? Is it God or the angel? The answer is yes. The biblical writer makes no effort to distinguish them. So why are the Biblical Unitarians making that effort? I think that's a good question. I think it's a fair question. It's not just representation.

In Genesis 48, there's no representation going on. This is Jacob's assessment of the events of his own life—under inspiration, in the text of Scripture. So if the Unitarians really want to claim to be biblical, they might want to pay attention to the text. Just saying.

Now I don't really understand *why*... Part of the question is why they approach things the way they do. Because I'm not a Unitarian... I think it's likely because they feel that what they can't understand can't be correct. I really think that's the case with a lot of this kind of stuff. "The text can't mean what it says or what it suggests," many times over. "Because if it did, I'd be able to know how everything works." That's just not an honest approach, to be blunt. I don't understand quantum physics. I don't even understand the physics and chemistry of how a car works. But that doesn't invalidate the science. By analogy, I think their whole position is dramatically underexposed to ancient Near Eastern thinking, for one thing. God or the gods as more than one person isn't just a biblical idea, it's older than that. This isn't a post-Christian invention, a post-first

15:00

century invention. It's really, really old, and it's not unique to the Bible. What is unique is the element of the incarnation. But the idea of God (or a god) as more than one person at the same time, simultaneously in different places—that is ancient Near Eastern stuff. This is why I recommend Benjamin Sommer's book, *The Bodies of God*. He's a Jew who point-blank just bluntly says, "Hey, the idea of a trinity is perfectly compatible with the Hebrew Bible."

Now I recommend Sommer because he goes back into the ancient Near Eastern material, specifically he spends a lot of time on the Akkadian and Assyrian material. And look, he's going to sound like a modalist when you read him because he's a Jew. He's not a Christian. He's not sensitive to how we would articulate certain things, but take the data for what they are. Sommer's book is really worthwhile because he ferrets out a lot of this kind of thing.

I think the Biblical Unitarians are also radically underexposed when it comes to things like how the New Testament authors repurpose Yahweh texts from the Old Testament to talk about Jesus and show that they view Jesus as Yahweh incarnate. They just do that. So I think these "Biblical Unitarians" spend a lot of time proof-texting or focusing on the problems—what they think is a problem, but for an ancient person, they'd just give you a blank stare, like "What's the problem?" They become the measure of truth to themselves. "If I can't see how everything works, then I can't be really reading what I'm reading." I just don't think that's a legitimate method. I think it's dishonest, to be blunt. The New Testament writers will repurpose Yahweh texts—texts that don't have an angel or some other character. Yahweh. The Tetragrammaton. The four consonants. And they will make Jesus the character or the speaker of those texts. You don't do that as a Jew if you don't believe that Jesus *is* Yahweh.

We interviewed David Capes last year at SBL. He's done a lot of work in this area of Yahweh texts with Jesus. We had him on the podcast at SBL because a lot of his work has been now put into popular reading form. It's called *The Divine Christ*. If you can handle scholarly discussion, then you can get the expensive one. If you get the popular one, you're going to get the gist of the data.

So I think this is why "Biblical Unitarians" is an oxymoron. They're just dramatically underexposed to this kind of thing. Just to throw in another two cents, they just seem to follow the thinking that trinitarianism is a post-first century invention by some theologians, and that just is not the case. It's an idea put forth in the biblical text. Earlier religions have similar conceptions. I think Biblical Unitarianism (or any Unitarianism) puts deity in a box as well. I have a hard time understanding how a Unitarian can affirm the reality of God (they accept that there's God) and then deny God the ability to be more than one person. "Because that's too hard to comprehend." Sorry, but deity in and of itself can't be successfully and completely comprehended. So when you start denying attributes to a deity that are put forth by a source you claim to honor (i.e., the

Bible) and you admit that you're not a deity yourself, your approach is inconsistent. It just is.

I think in the last part of the question there was something about whether his strategy is a good one. I'm a little bit lost and confused by the wording of the question, because Heath is talking about their strategy and then asking me if his thinking is sound. I don't know where one ends and the other begins. So I can't really comment on the end of that. But that's what I'd say about the Unitarian thing.

TS: Samuel in Winston Salem, NC, has a question about an answer you gave in our episode 70.

19:10 **What happens to the Holy Spirit if someone turns their back on God? Does the Holy Spirit leave?**

20:00 **MH:** The answer is the Holy Spirit keeps doing what he does. He keeps drawing and working in an effort to keep someone believing. Salvation cannot be lost, but it can be rejected. And sadly, it is rejected all the time. A lot. The Spirit's role (along with God's Providence working with and through other people in somebody's life) is to draw people to salvation and prompt people to faith—to believe. All God asks is that we believe the gospel. He won't force us to believe. Neither will the Spirit force us to believe. Faith isn't faith if it is coerced. God's offer of salvation can be rejected, and often it is. You can't say you believe and then turn to belief in no god or to another god. There are no Baal worshippers in heaven, as I've said many times. There are no rejecters of the gospel in heaven, either. You must believe and keep believing. Stay in the faith—the obedience of faith. It has nothing to do with works. It has nothing to do with performance. It has nothing to do with merit. It has everything to do with believing that God will do what he said he will do because of what Jesus did on the cross.

So that doesn't mean that you never have questions or doubts. We all do. We're weak and human and God knows it. God doesn't expect perfect belief. (Never a doubt that creeps in. Never a question.) God doesn't expect perfect belief. He expects believing loyalty. That means you believe even when you do have doubts. You throw yourself on the mercy of God's plan in the gospel, in the midst of these kinds of struggles, instead of rejecting it or trying something else. God expects believing loyalty. It's all he asks. He will not force faith. That would be non-faith. Faith isn't faith if it is coerced.

So what the Spirit does is... The Spirit's ministry to us, both to the lost and to people who have embraced the gospel, is to bring about faith. It's to help people believe. And the Spirit never stops doing that. So if you or somebody you know is struggling with the gospel, "Do I believe it or not? I don't know where I'm at," you have to reduce the question to the simplest element. Do you believe the gospel or don't you? Don't worry about, "Oh, there was this time back when I was 3..." Or "when I was 20..." It doesn't matter. The question is, "Do you believe right

now or do you reject the gospel in favor of no God at all or some other gospel, something else?" Even if you're struggling or are uncertain or have questions. "I can't wrap my mind around... Why does God do this?" All of that's normal. And God knows it. God doesn't expect you to be supernatural. He knows what you are and who you are. But what he does expect is belief and believing loyalty. Stay with him. Trust him. Throw yourself on his mercy. That's what God wants.

TS: Sean in Belton, TX, says:

22:40

I was listening to a Bible study on the book of James and the priest stated that he thought it was written by James, the brother of Jesus. I know there are a few other possible authors, as well, and wanted to know who Dr. Heiser thought wrote it?

MH: I've never really cared to look at this question in depth. I've always heard and read that it was the Lord's brother. Honestly, I really don't think the question has any importance, which is probably why I never pursued it. So I've never really cared. [laughs] I don't know how else to say it.

What you need is that the author needs to certainly be a Jew and a literate Jew, very conversant with their theology in Judaism. And I think the author also needed to have a strong acquaintance with the teachings of Jesus. And both of those conditions are met with the Lord's brother and could be met by somebody else. I don't think that the question ultimately really affects how we would read the book of James or not.

TS: Jay in Willamsport, PA, has our next question.

23:45

In Romans chapter 2, after showing that everyone will be judged by God and are sinners who need mercy, Paul talks directly to the Jews who are still trusting in their heritage or the Law in Rom 2:17 saying "But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God." And then in verse 21 he begins challenging their claim of righteousness by asking them "Do you steal?" "Do you commit adultery?" "Do you rob temples?" Why does he bring up robbing temples? Why did he think that was going to help drive home his point? Were there a lot of Jews robbing temples in those days?" [MH laughs] Those temple-robbing Jews.

Some commentaries want to make this about sacrilege or disrespecting the Temple. But, Paul references "temples" (plural), not the one temple in Jerusalem. What is Paul's intention when he raises the issue of robbing temples?

25:00

MH: Well, I'm going to have BDAG open here because I... BDAG and Moulton and Milligan—these sources are go-to resources for this kind of thing. The first thing to establish is that the word "temples" isn't in the Greek. The noun

“temples” is not there. So the fact that an English translation has plural temples has nothing to do with the issue. You have a verb here. The Greek lemma *hierosuleo* can be translated “to commit sacrilege” or to rob temples. Other scholars take it different ways. And really, the different ways derive from the usage of the verb in other sources. So Paul could very easily be asking, “Hey, do you commit sacrilege?” Which is quite wide. That opens the door to lots of different things. But basically, it’s dishonoring God. To commit sacrilege is to dishonor God. This, I would say, is Paul’s real point. You could even put something like, “Do you reject the Messiah?” or something that broad, because that would dishonor God because the Messiah is God’s son, Jesus—that whole thing. The word itself is pretty obscure. The verb occurs only here in the New Testament. We don’t have a verb with an object noun. (The word “temples” is not even in the verse.) So you only get this verb here. There is a noun form that exists. You’ll see it in the Septuagint, for instance, really only in 2 Maccabees 13:6. In that text, it actually does describe the action of robbing a temple, and that’s probably why the verb gets translated this way by some translators in the creation of English Bibles. Because somebody would go back, “Hey, where is this used in the Septuagint?” That’s sort of your first... Other than “How is the word used in context in this source (i.e., the New Testament)?” “Oh, we have one. Well, that doesn’t much help. That’s the one I’m trying to figure out.” Well, the next thing you do is you go look at the Septuagint. And there you don’t get much help, either. You get this one occurrence, and “Oh, it’s robbing a temple there, so that’s how I’m going to translate it.” [laughs] Look, I’m putting a human face on how English translations are corrected. If you think that translators take every verse and look up every word exhaustively in context and sit there and noodle every reference before they create a translation, you’re wrong. They don’t have that much time. Let’s just be bluntly honest about it.

Now BDAG (the Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich lexicon—the standard lexicon for New Testament studies) cites Josephus for an instance of a wider meaning. Let me just hover over that and look it up. This is from *Wars of the Jews* I.654.

At this the king was in such an extravagant passion that he overcame his disease [for the time], and he went out and spake to the people; wherein he made a terrible accusation against those men, as being guilty of sacrilege...

If you look in the context, we don’t have temple-robbing there. It’s just wider than that. It’s more general. And so “guilty of sacrilege” is a legitimate translation there. So he accuses the men of being guilty of sacrilege...

...and as making greater attempts under pretense of their law; and he thought they deserved to be punished as impious persons.

So impiety, sacrilege, dishonoring God, so on and so forth. The other source I think is a little bit better. I have Moulton and Milligan open here. And Moulton and Milligan cite a few other instances of a broader meaning. If you have Moulton and Milligan, this is page 301. If you don't have it, I recommend getting it. It is used in some passages for robbing temples, but they cite a passage in *Pseudo Hereclius*. That's E p. 7, page 64, Bernays translation.

It is probable, however, that the word, which is used...

They say that in that passage, in that place, this is probably what's going on in the New Testament in Romans 2, where we see something like just being impious, doing sacrilege, that sort of thing. Let me just quote a little bit from Moulton and Milligan:

The wider sense, which we have seen the corresponding verb has in Romans 2:22 [MH: they've already told you that they think it's committing sacrilege] also attaches to [the noun] in Acts 19:37...

Then they give a cross reference to 2 Maccabees 4:42. Acts 19:37 says this:

For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess.

30:00 There's no reference to temple-robbing specifically in the context of Acts 19, so it's just a wider breadth of doing something that dishonors a deity, being guilty of doing something there. They quote Lightfoot, who takes the same view: sacrilege, impiety, so on and so forth. So if you have BDAG, Moulton and Milligan especially, you could look up some of the primary sources on... If you go to the Perseus website [<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>], you'll get English translations for all these. It's all free online. And you'll see the short answer to the question is that Paul doesn't accuse them of robbing temples, because A) the word temples isn't in the passage, and B) the verb that's actually used can have a wider meaning of just being impious or dishonoring God or something like that. It can just cast a wider net into which you could throw all sorts of things.

31:00 **TS:** Alright, Steve has two questions. The first one is about the end of Genesis 4:26, where it says, "At that time people began to worship the Lord." That's from the NET Bible. His question is:

Do I understand correctly that Dr. Heiser was the primary translator for Genesis in this translation [the NET Bible]?

TS: Were you?

MH: No, I wasn't. [laughs] So we don't have a good beginning here. I wasn't a participant in any way in the NET Bible translation. I did translate... (I even hate

to use...) Boy, I don't want to have to go into a history of the LEB. I did the first layer translation for the LEB, which was produced by Lexham Press. That has since been touched by several hands, so I don't know that I can claim much even for the LEB Genesis, but I at least did the first layer of translation for the LEB. But I didn't do anything for the NET Bible.

TS: Alright, there you go. So I'm going to move on to the rest of his question. He's thinking that that rendering is what you would agree with, but...

32:10 **I've heard that some rabbis believed [Genesis 4:26] meant, "At that time people began to *profane* the name of the Lord." The trajectory of people from Adam to Noah seems to be a decline into evil, which makes the profane wording seem logically to work better. Is the rabbi story a myth? Grammatically, can it mean profane?**

MH: What we have here... I think the easy path here is that you're going to get different English translations here, and they arise because some translations don't realize that there is a homograph issue here. Now a homograph... Hebrew has homographs just like English. A homograph is a couple of words that are spelled exactly the same way, but they're entirely different words. They do not derive from each other. They are entirely different words. So if I use the word "bored," that can describe a condition of mental lethargy or drilling a hole. They have no relationship to each other. It's a homograph issue. The human mouth can only make a finite number of sounds, so every language has homographs: words that are entirely different that do not derive from one another but are spelled the same way.

35:00 Now that's what we have going on in Genesis 4 here. So the easy path is to go to Google and put in "drmsb.com" (that's my homepage) and put in something like "allegorical interpretation of the names in Genesis 5." I blogged about this years ago. This particular post had something to do with a Chuck Missler thing about him having some allegorical interpretation of the names in Genesis 5. Well, you get into this issue in Genesis 5. There's something in Genesis 5 that overlaps with Genesis 4:26, where you get this particular issue. I have it visually mapped out as to why there is a problem here. So there is a homograph issue. "Homonym" might be the term you're familiar with from English grammar. When I grew up, they used the word homonym. That's what's going on here. So I would recommend googling that and then reading through that, going down to where you hit Genesis 4:26. It's under the name Enosh, if you want more direction.

There's no Scripture citation that in the days of Enosh, people began defiling God's name. I'm guessing that he's saying that Enosh means this kind of idea. I'm guessing that Missler means Genesis 4:26, which most Bibles have as, "At that time, people began to call upon the name of the Lord." Missler thinks it's a mistranslation, but it isn't. It should say, "At that time, people began to call upon the name of the Lord." The homograph (homonym) issue is *halal* in Hebrew.

There is a *halal* that means to begin and there is a *halal* that means to defile. They are two entirely different words. You have that verb in Genesis 4:26 followed by an infinitive (“to” and then a verb). And infinitive is “to do something,” “to call” in this case. It makes no sense to say, “Men began to defile to call on the name of the Lord.” Very obviously, the wording (the second verbal form—the infinitive) tells you that the first one (the *halal*) means “to begin.” To begin to call. So defilement is not in this passage at all. What you have is the homograph issue. But again, go up to Google and enter “drmsb.com” and put in something like “allegorical interpretation names Genesis 5” and you’re going to find a description there with an illustration.

TS: The second question is about Ephesians 2, where Paul is talking about how the Gentiles who were alienated from Israel (Deuteronomy 32) have now been brought near in Christ.

36:40

Ephesians 2:19 in the ESV says, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” Who do you think is in view here being called “saints/holy ones” and “members of the household of God”? Are both terms referring to Israel because there is a parallelism back to the term strangers and aliens, or is there a distinction between “holy one” and “members of the household of God”?

MH: Yeah, “stranger and aliens” would, of course, apply to Gentiles. That’s pretty obvious. I don’t see a distinction between the Gentile identifications there and the saints or the household of God. I see saints and household of God as describing the same group into which the Gentiles belong, which is one family of God. What that means is I’d be in the group of commentators that would take the *kai* in Ephesians 2:19... *Kai* is a Greek word. It’s the conjunction that, if you looked it up in Strong’s would probably say “and.” It would get glossed with the words “and” and “also.” It can also be translated “even” or “that is.” So here’s Ephesians 2:19:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens but you are fellow citizens. You Gentiles are fellow citizens with the saints (*kai*) and the members of the household of God.

I think it should be translated, “with the saints, that is, the members of the household of God (the holy ones).” Or “the saints, *even* the members of the household of God.” Saints and members of the household of God are the same thing. *Kai* has a semantic range. It’s going to be determined by context. Paul, in Ephesians and Galatians (basically everything Paul writes), is going to stress the unity of the body of Christ. There is one body of Christ. There is one family of God, into which both Jew and Gentile alike are included by faith. The gospel is for the Jew and the Gentile. We don’t have different gospels for different people groups. We have one family of God, one body of Christ, one Lord, one faith, one

baptism—the whole thing. How many times does Paul have to say “one” or convey that idea till we get it?

40:00

So we don't have distinct peoples of God. We have a circumcision-neutral thing called the body of Christ—the Church—that is, the people of God. And the Gentile inclusion into the family of God goes all the way back to even before we had these distinctions, before we even had a seed of Abraham. Because it actually begins there. At the judgment at Babel, God calls Abraham and says, “It's going to be through your seed that all these other nations are going to be blessed.” They're going to be brought back into the family. At that point we have a distinction so that... What God's goal is is to reverse that judgment, not keep it intact by having two separate peoples of God. God's goal is to reverse what he had to do at the Babel event—to dispense with the nations, disperse them, assign them to the sons of God (all that stuff that we talk about a lot here and of course in *Unseen Realm*), and then go off and create a new people (Israel) through this guy, Abraham. The original plan was not to have any of that in the picture at all. But that happened because of rebellion.

So God's goal is to go back to Eden, when these distinctions weren't in existence, not to maintain the distinctions. So I'm not going to speculate on... I don't think the questioner is angling for any of this, but there are unfortunate theological/religious reasons why people like to have two peoples of God. It helps them prop up some point of their theology. That's not what God wants. It's not what he's going to end with. God will get his way. The original Edenic vision *will* be brought to pass. It doesn't include these distinctions, and Paul is very consistent with that. So I'm in the group that takes the *kai* here as ascensive (that's one of the grammatical terms for it). Translate it as “even” or like a parenthetical “that is.” “...the saints, in other words, the members of the household of God.” And into that single body the Gentiles have been put. That's the mystery that Paul talks about later in the letter, in the very next chapter of Ephesians—the mystery that the Gentiles are included. So this isn't unique to me. You could look up this kind of talk in *Word Biblical Commentary* with Andrew Lincoln or Marcus Barth in *Anchor Yale* or Theilman (I can't remember what his first name is) in the *Baker Exegetical Commentary*. This is very normative, what I just described to you, in terms of how scholars do exegesis in this passage.

TS: Our last question is from Dustin. He has a question about our Naked Bible Podcast episode 162: The Evil Eye.

MH: It's ancient history, man. [laughs]

TS: I know. We're coming up on 300. Pretty historic. He wants to know:

42:20

Is there a connection between the evil eye, along with the Garden incident, Satan, the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and Genesis 3:3-6?

MH: Yeah, this is probably angling on the “saw that it was good to look upon,” “the gaze,” all that kind of stuff. I don’t think there’s a textual connection in that passage to... People are going to have to go back and listen to the Evil Eye episode (Naked Bible Podcast episode 162). It actually covers things like desiring that something bad would happen to someone. You look at that person and hope for their demise. (You’re thinking bad thoughts... it’s part of this idea.) Or covetousness is an element here. It actually... The idea of the evil eye is not really a talisman kind of thing in the biblical world. It’s more or less those two kinds of things: wishing ill upon someone or “I want that” kind of thing. So I don’t think there’s any direct textual connection between that stuff that we talked about in the episode and Genesis 3. However, I do think that there is something of a conceptual connection because of the covetousness element. So that’s where I would land on this. I think that someone who’s familiar with the evil eye stuff and understands the covetousness element of it could go back and look at Genesis 3 and, “Oh, yeah, she wanted that.” In other words, there is a conceptual—a thematic—connection between the two. But I don’t see any direct textual connection.

TS: Alright, Mike. That’s all we have for this episode. So we appreciate it.

MH: Well, good.

TS: Yeah, those are good. Don’t forget, go livestream our conference. It’s next weekend. I can’t wait to see everybody. I hope everybody has safe travels. Looking forward to it. Meeting the new scholars. We have some good ones.

MH: Of course we have good ones. [laughter]

TS: We always have good ones. What am I talking about?

MH: Of course we do.

TS: Yeah, they’re all good.

MH: These are all people for whom the idea of teaching their content to people outside the academy is not new. They love to do it. They enjoy it. So they are looking forward to you as an audience, because you care. You care about biblical scholarship. So it’s going to be a good time.

TS: Alright, looking forward to it. NakedBibleConference.com. Go check out the information to livestream it. You can watch on demand for three months. If you have any questions, email me at TreyStricklin@gmail.com. I’m happy to answer those questions. With that, Mike, we appreciate all the people who sent in those questions and we appreciate you answering those questions. And I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.

45:00

