

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 325

Q&A 38

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Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

### Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- Is it okay for me to have a collection of dragon figures? [8:45]
- Why is there a difference between Genesis 2:17 and 3:3 regarding the prohibition for Eve to touch the fruit and not just eat it? [14:20]
- What does the Bible say about the moderate drinking of wine or use of other substances like cannabis? [19:15]
- What is the significance of Noah sending out a raven before a dove? [32:10]
- Is ordination a requirement for planting a church? [39:10]

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, episode 325: Our 38<sup>th</sup> Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike!

**MH:** Is that for real? We've done 38 of these?

**TS:** Thirty-eight, in five years.

**MH:** That's just crazy. What does... I'm terrible at math. That's how many a year? Let's see... If it was five a year... If it was 50, it'd be 10 a year. Is that right? I'm terrible at math.

**TS:** [laughter] I want to hear your logic. I want to hear your [inaudible].

**MH:** No, I'm just wondering how many we do a year. If it's a low number, we should do more.

**TS:** We've done almost 40, and we've done it for five years. So what's 40 divided by five?

**MH:** It's a little less than 10 a year. Is that right?

**TS:** Yeah, it's about eight-ish a year.

**MH:** And there are 52 weeks in a year. So what's the percentage there? That's like... Yeah, I don't know. I'm not going to get my calculator out. This is embarrassing. But... Maybe we should do a couple more of these a year. I don't know. Make it 10 a year. That's not a bad number.

**TS:** We initially planned to do this once every four to six episodes. And we've hit that mark. About eight a year is roughly one every six weeks.

**MH:** If you say so, then that makes me feel good. I feel better now.

**TS:** Well, Mike, we need to let everybody know that we've got some more sad news. Besides the conference being cancelled, the cruise is now cancelled.

**MH:** Yep. And honestly, it's the right thing to do. It's the safest course, I think, pragmatically. Where people have already and would find themselves, even in October, it's probably the best thing to do.

**TS:** Yeah, absolutely. The cruise line went ahead and cancelled it. So I guess they're taking a beating, because they're the ones that cancelled it. Not us. But I think we would've anyway.

**MH:** And we need them, you know? [laughter]

**TS:** Yeah. Well, Mike, we could get a little rowboat or something, and...

**MH:** Right. There you go. [laughs] We'll start working on that right now. [laughs]

**TS:** Alright. Yeah. Sounds good. Alright, we just wanted to let everybody know, again, if you haven't heard, the Naked Bible Cruise in October has been cancelled. So hopefully the world gets back to normal next year, Mike.

**MH:** Yep. Yeah, that's what we're hoping. Just move everything up a calendar year and plan accordingly, just like it was 2020, except it'll be 2021.

**TS:** Anything else going on in Florida? Y'all opening back up?

**MH:** Yeah, they are opening back up. I have sad personal news, but it's not Florida-related. But yesterday... And I've alluded to this woman before—the woman who basically introduced me to the Lord through her son (this nine-year-old kid that lived next to my grandma). That was really my first introduction to the gospel. She passed away. So she would've been around my mom's age. My mom is in her low 80s, so maybe a little younger than that. But she was in failing health and I saw on Facebook that she had passed away. Because I don't go to Facebook that often, but friends, of course, do. And my wife let me know that my friend (whose name is Brian)... He's the namesake for the main character in my novels. He had posted that his mom had passed away. And I knew she was really failing. They live in PA. So that's sad, but at the same time, she's with the

Lord. It's just unfortunate that I don't live in my hometown, to have been able to see her. But we'll see her again. But it's just kind of a downer. Yesterday I was doing an interview, and for some reason I thought of her and mentioned again (as I've done on many interviews and here and there as I speak) her role and his role in my own life. So then we have... Later on that night, my wife let me know what had been posted. So it's sad, but good at the same time that she's with the Lord.

**TS:** Yeah, absolutely. Our prayers are out to her family. And like you said, we'll see her again.

**MH:** Yep. Just, despite their difficulties, she's just a good example of doing... Here's a woman (four kids, two of them have cystic fibrosis) just struggling every day. But she's in the right place. She's got this kid next door who doesn't know the Lord (that would be me). And she and her son talked to me about the Lord. You just do what you're capable of doing. You never know what the ripple-effect is. So a lot of times people worry about... They equate serving the Lord with doing something visible or that has numbers to it. It's just really the wrong way to think about the Christian life and ministry in general. You can do ministry every day, no matter where you're at. But I wanted to mention it, just so that people know. Because, like I said, I do mention her from time to time. Her name was Carol. But just wanted everybody to know, because... (They might see my note to this guy on Facebook... who knows?) But since I mention her, I just wanted to say something. But you know... She... I think it's fair to say... How do I put this without making it sound like I have too bloated a view of what we're doing here? But look at the ripple-effects. So I think that she'll... I wasn't the only kid or only person I'm sure that she led to the Lord. But it's not going to shock me... It doesn't surprise me at all to think that the Lord's going to tell her she did well.

**TS:** You know, to put that into perspective, just think of the one person out there that you could bring to the Lord, and think about what that one person can later go on to achieve and the lives they can impact, just like you, and this show...

**MH:** Yeah. Or that one person is the person who impacts that other person. You just never know. We're back to "Just do your job." [laughs] Just do your job. It's so simple.

**TS:** Well, Mike, I'm going to transition the best I can from that and talk about something a little bit happier. I just got notified that somebody bought a Naked Bible Podcast mask. I was like, "What is that?" But I went and looked on our store and they have a new item in apparel. It's a mask. You can actually go buy masks with our logo on them, along with all of the other things that we sell. So somebody bought two Naked Bible Podcast masks. That's hilarious.

**MH:** Oh, I've got to get that. That's what I'm doing right after the show. [laughs]

**TS:** Yeah. They're \$15.

**MH:** I don't care what they cost. [laughs] I've got to get that. That is awesome.

**TS:** I'm going to have to get one, too. [MH laughs] And when you get yours, Mike, you're going to have to take a picture of yourself in your mask.

**MH:** Oh, yeah. We will. I'll get them for the pugs too. We'll just wrap them around the pugs. And there you go.

**TS:** That's awesome. That is awesome.

**MH:** [laughs] That is perfect.

**TS:** Yes sir. Well, let's just transition into our questions. We've got several good questions. And our first one's going to be from Michelle. She says:

8:45

**I have loved and collected dragons for about 20 years. I have about 100 statues and plushies around my house. I can't quite put my finger on why, but I find them enchanting and enjoy the mystery around them. I prefer to think of them as benevolent creatures. As you well know, dragons are often associated with evil or with Satan. In the past few years, I can't help but wonder if I am disrespecting God in some way by liking them so much. On one hand, he created all things, so in theory, if they were ever real, it could be reasoned that God created them. On the other hand, there is the association with evil. Should I be beating myself up so much over this collection or should I let it all go for my Lord?**

**MH:** Well, I think you should throw them all away except for the Godzilla ones and send those to me. [laughter]

**TS:** And me.

10:00

**MH:** Yeah. [laughs] We should have a good Godzilla model right here, or maybe in the FringePop studio. No, I don't think you should worry about it unless you have some sort of spiritual fascination with them. People are going to wonder, "Why does Mike answer that way?" Well, a number of reasons. The enemy of God that deceived Eve wasn't really a snake or a dragon. A lot of negative dragon lore in Christian circles derives from that misguided notion. That's probably obvious to most listeners.

Another way of saying this is that Revelation 12 (that refers to the devil and Satan, the old serpent) isn't informing us that the devil was actually a member of the animal kingdom. It's not saying that. And by extension, no other supernatural powers of darkness are really reptiles or dragons. Dragons and sea monsters are metaphors for chaos. But why? And what's the thought there? Well, the metaphors that are really linked to dragons really have to do with the sea. We

see this in Daniel, with the beast that rises from the sea and the beast of Revelation (the dragon from the sea). Why is it that they're associated with the sea? And by the way, that is really where this comes from. And most of, like, European dragon lore isn't going to have anything to do with this. But putting that aside for the moment... It's associated with the sea because the sea is a place where humans can't live. It's inhospitable. And it's filled with big creatures that we don't see on land. So we wonder and we let our imaginations fill in the blanks of what those things are. And by extension, they become metaphors for things that are hostile to humanity—things that are associated with death and so on and so forth.

This is how metaphors work. The meaning of the metaphor is going to be constructed and used by people who are experiencing the world in a certain way. It doesn't have to have an ontological reality (these connections). A lot of dragon lore is just pure myth itself. And I'm using the word "myth" in that sentence to mean *not true*. It's simply not true. A lot of dragon lore derives from misidentification of whales and discovery of dinosaur skeletons and fossils, that sort of thing.

So having said all that, your apprehension would ultimately be the result of flawed thinking that gave rise to dragon lore. So that's why I'm saying I don't think you really need to worry about this. So I could elaborate. I think you get the hint. I don't think it's dangerous to collect dragon stuff any more than it would be to collect fossils or collect pictures of dinosaur fossils or alligator skins ("Don't collect those") or other creatures that the Old Testament for instance associated with demons.

Here's where it could be... I'm going to be a little silly here to illustrate the point. How about goats? Goat demons associated with goats. "All the goat farmers out there are in league with the devil," right? Well, that's just ridiculous. How about owls? And hawks? Isaiah 34:11, you get birds of prey mentioned in places that associated with chaos and demonic creatures. "Well, then you must be in league with the devil if you're into falconry or if you work in a raptor clinic.

Again, I could go on and on with these sorts of examples. These objects don't mean the same thing to us—they don't have the same metaphorical impact—and our thinking about these things wouldn't really contribute to the metaphors that we might have to convey the notion of chaos and evil. So I don't think we need to react in this way, in the way that you're being fearful of in relation to this. But again, that's all predicated on your own self-evaluation, that you don't have some sort of strange spiritual fascination with them or with the lore itself. But if that's not evident, I don't think you need to worry about it.

**TS:** Tim from Austin, TX, has our next few questions. And he asks:

**Is there significance to the fact that Eve says to the serpent that God told her not to touch the fruit and not eat only? Why is there a difference in Genesis 2:17 and 3:3?**

**MH:** You know, some commentators see a nuance distinction here and then try to guess (and that is what they're doing—guessing) at what this proposed distinction might mean. For example, I'll just read you a little section from Wenham that he has on this. He says:

15:00

These slight alterations to God's remarks suggest that the woman has already moved slightly away from God toward the serpent's attitude. The creator's generosity is not being given its full due, and he is being painted as a little harsh and repressive, forbidding the tree even to be touched. Indeed, the way "lest you die" follows "touch" suggests that not just eating it but touching it may be lethal.

That's from Wenham's Genesis commentary. So he presumes a distinction; then he proceeds to speculate about this. Other commentators (and I'm just going to tell you that this is where I'm at, too) don't see any meaningful difference. In other words, they would say, "The two descriptions really point to the same idea," and really for a couple of reasons.

- 1) You can't really eat the fruit unless you touch it. This isn't like a pie-eating contest where you can't use your hands. "Eat the fruit of the tree without touching it." It's just kind of silly. It's an absurd picture. Or maybe you can stand under the tree and wait for it to drop into your mouth. "Don't do that." No, if they're going to violate the command, they have to pluck the fruit, they have to touch the tree. So there's really not much of a distinction here, in my mind. I'm in this group.
- 2) Secondly, the lemma here for touching is used in other passages to denote more than touching—in other words, where the thing commented on is really well beyond just a tactile experience. For instance, in Genesis 20:6. Here's what we get. And the context here is Abraham and Abimelech. That story where Abraham lies and says (it's a shaded half-truth), "She's my sister." So in verse 6 we read this, where God is speaking to Abimelech in a dream about Sarah:

**¶ Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart [MH: Abimelech didn't know that she was married.], and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her.**

Well, obviously it doesn't mean that God forbade Abimelech from walking up to Sarah and taking one finger and touching her. He prevents him from having sex with her. But nevertheless, the lemma "touch" (the same one that occurs back in

the early Genesis passages) is used. You get the same thing in Genesis 26:11, where the verb itself means a lot more than just a tactile experience. So Abimelech in Genesis 26:11 (with Isaac this time)...

**“So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, “Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”**

Again, he doesn't mean, “Whoever walks up to them and puts a pinkie on them, you're going to die.” No, it means that whoever harms this person. Or in the case of Isaac's wife, whoever sleeps with her. So the lemma itself means a lot more than just the act of touching. And I think that needs to be factored into the situation here in Genesis. So you could very well reason that touching really speaks of violating the original command—that that's the point. And this is the group I'm in. I don't think there's much of a meaningful difference. And I think it's gets a little absurd if you extrapolate out. How would you violate the command without touching it? Stand under the tree and wait till one drops into your mouth? No. It's just kind of obvious. If you're going to eat this, you've got to touch the tree. You've got to pluck the fruit off. That's the way you violate it.

**TS:** Tim's second question is:

19:15 **What does the Bible actually say about drinking wine? Is teetotalism a biblical concept? Proverbs 23:31 is an often-cited verse for abstinence from alcohol. Most concede drunkenness is a sin. But if drinking is permitted in moderation, how do you define drunkenness? Is it “buzzed” or “falling on the floor?” What did ancient writers have to say on this matter? If moderate drinking is allowed, when what would the Bible say about the moderate use of cannabis or other substances?**

20:00 **MH:** The Bible doesn't condemn the consumption of alcohol in... It doesn't express as a command teetotalism. The consumption of alcohol in moderate amounts is allowed. Honestly, there's really no way to do justice to this topic in a Q&A. It's actually quite a large topic. You get into fermentation techniques. Basically because of our technology, the alcohol we produce is much stronger than in biblical days. And most of what we would have as alcohol would fall under the “strong drink” warning, which is different than wine in wisdom texts. And even in the modern world, we have this technological issue. In the Reconstruction Era (the late 19<sup>th</sup> century) one of the reasons why there was this big prohibition movement in the Reconstruction Era and on into the Progressive Era was because the technology changed. The alcohol got stronger—a lot stronger. So it led to all sorts of social problems (hence the big emphasis on prohibition).

So we can actually go back into our own immediate history and see how this would have mattered. It's really going to matter when we compare what we have now back to the ancient world. I mean, there's all sorts of sub-trajectories in this

topic, beyond just the exegetical issues of the passage. There's a lot to think about here. The arguments that people try to make... And I'm quite familiar with the teetotaler argument because my first context as a believer was fundamentalism. But to be honest with you, the arguments that are made on behalf of that view are really weak. The important line not to cross is drunkenness. But like you say, how do we define that? Well, I would personally... And just on a personal note here, I don't drink alcohol at all. This will shock some listeners, but I have never tasted beer. I can't even stand the smell of it. Part of the reason is probably because I grew up in an alcoholic home. I didn't need a preacher to tell me not to do that. I've never had any sort of desire or inclination for it. I just don't do it. My wife will have some wine or something. I don't extrapolate from my predilection over to everybody else under my roof.

But backtracking to the subject, one of the things that, if I were having this discussion with somebody who was living in my house, I would say, "Hey, you know, you need to consider 1 Corinthians 6:12," when you're talking about how do we know that we might sort of be getting to this line that is admittedly not perfectly easy to define. But this is the passage where Paul says, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything." And he's basically saying, "I'm not going to be under the control of anything. I want to be in control of my faculties—who I am, what I'm doing, what I'm thinking—all this kind of stuff."

And so I think that's actually a good touchpoint to help maybe try to define, at least in practice, what we mean by *buzzed* condition, like you described. Well, do you really have control over... Is it beginning to affect your vision, your thinking, etc.? So I think that's a worthwhile thing to loop into the discussion. I think the same thing applies to drugs, though I think the ancient association of drugs with demonic presence and demonic solicitation would have made the drug issue more of an issue in antiquity. But even that really goes to intent.

I'll try to unpack that real quickly. So basically, the drugs were more powerful, or maybe it would get you more quickly to an altered state of consciousness, whose effects would include visionary experiences. This led people to believe they were contacting spiritual presences, and hence the sinister association in antiquity between drug use and the spirit world. Plant-based drugs are among the prohibited practices with respect to what English translations loosely call "sorcery." And there are lemmas that specifically target plant-based drugs. Again, the context of those things is solicitation. It's divination. It's trying to contact the other side to get information or contact the dead or whatever.

And so these things that would produce altered states of consciousness were thought to assist that process, hence they get condemned. So if you go to Deuteronomy 18:10-11:

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**<sup>10</sup>There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells**



**fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer <sup>11</sup> or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead...**

For our discussion purposes, the two Hebrew terms that are underneath *sorcerer* and *charmer* are the issue. Now I'm going to read you a little section here from Anne Jeffers' book, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*. This is a 1996 work put out by Brill. I don't know that it's in print anymore, and if it is, it's going to be a few hundred dollars. But this is the major study on magic and divination. She's talking about the first one here, the one that's translated sorcerer, which is *mekasef*. The lemma is *k-s-p* or *kasaf*. So she writes:

This term is most frequently translated "sorcery," but comparative terminology in other Semitic language points us in the direction of one who concocts potions from plants or an herbalist.

Scholars generally agree that the root *hbr* refers to the use of charms and spells since the root conveys the idea of "uniting, joining, and weaving" [MH: *hbr* is a lemma that means to join, to put together], which may by extension speak of the practice of "tying or wrapping magical knots or threads around people or objects."

Or to put ingredients together to create these charms, whatever they are. So you have a few things there and you say, "What if I'm an herbalist? Good grief! I grow herbs in my back yard! I need to repent!" No. Consider the context. The context is divination. And the reason that it gets the association is that it's producing altered states to experience the spiritual world. That kind of thing is condemned.

So I don't know. I can read what the effects of this or that drug are. But I guess I would question the wisdom... You know, we do have wisdom texts in the Bible. This is why we have them. Wisdom texts are not flat-out dos and don'ts. They are, "Well, if you do this, it might be really stupid." Or "If you don't do that, it might be unwise." This is the sort of thing that you have to consider. Why would you fiddle with it? Why would you fiddle with it? I *do* know, because of my home... I not only grew up in an alcoholic household, but I had at least one stepbrother who was really into drugs. When my dad did get sober (which happened when we were in junior high and he never touched alcohol from that point to his death a couple of years ago), we had a steady stream... My dad had a real soft spot for people who were addicted. So he had a construction business that I worked for for three years. And we had a steady stream of people from jail, people from halfway houses, people from AA, coming through. He would give them jobs. And sad to say, most of them never made it. And they would tell us (my dad's kids), "Don't do pot. That's where I started." I must have heard that a hundred times. You know? And "Okay, dude. You're the one that's addicted. So I guess I'll consider you an authority." [laughs] You know? So it just... Why do we want to experiment with this stuff? I just don't get it. I don't see how it's wise.

That's a key thought. *Wisdom*. If all you're concerned about is the black and white, dos and don'ts, frankly, that's *unwise*. Wisdom material—wisdom living in general—isn't equatable with just the strict dos and don'ts. It's "Make good decisions." "Is this a good decision?" So again, my own personal experience, even though I've never done this stuff, I've probably seen a lifetime or two of it. Not direct experience, but just seeing how it destroys people. So I would just question, "How is this wise?"

In the New Testament, you get in Galatians 5:20, *pharmakeia*. This is also equated with sorcery. Paul actually uses this word a couple times. Galatians 5:20 is one. It's in a list of vices. I'm going to read a little bit here, since I want to give the New Testament fair time here. This is from Moo's commentary on Galatians:

30:00

Sorcery translates the word *pharmakeia*, whose similarity to our English pharmacy reveals its basic meaning of dispensing drugs for medicinal purposes. In the Greek of our literature, however [MH: New Testament era], it has a negative sense, referring either to the administration of poison [MH: and he cites something from Josephus] or to the use of drugs in magical practices, and by extension, to those practices themselves, the word is used of the "secret arts" of the Egyptian magicians in the Septuagint (Exodus 7:11, 22; 8:3, 14...).

He has a bunch of cross references here. So it has this association. But that doesn't mean if you're a pharmacist, you need to repent. These things (these statements, these ideas) are in the context of divination and idolatries, soliciting the other side, so on and so forth. So we have to consider that context for them, which really in my head takes us to wisdom living. And my question would be, "How is this wise? Explain that to me." And wise doesn't mean, "Well, I just want to try it." Again, I'll repeat the question, "How is this wise?" I didn't ask you, "How is it pleasurable?" I asked you, "How is it wise?" Totally different question.

**TS:** Mike, I've never had beer either. [laughter]

**MH:** Right, right...

**TS:** Let me tell you, I've had some unwise moments in my college days.

**MH:** I'm sure you have. I know lots of people who have.

**TS:** Shout out to Texas Tech. Well, we'll move on from that.

**MH:** I'll let you edit that out and extricate yourself. [laughs]

**TS:** Naw, I'll leave it in. I'm alright. I'm alright. There's nothing wrong with that. I'll own my mistakes. That's how you learn. You've got to make mistakes in order to learn.

**MH:** That's good. And I watched *lots* of people make *lots* of mistakes. Some of them very badly.

**TS:** And hopefully you can learn from those mistakes. Alright, Tim's next question is:

32:10

**What is the significance of Noah sending out a raven before the dove?**

**MH:** Yeah, boy... This actually can get pretty long here. And you say, "Good grief. It's just a question of a raven and dove." I know, I know. But my answer here is influenced by something James Bejon wrote. I'm not sure I'm pronouncing the name correctly. But he has a lengthy paper... And I know he listens to the podcast. He's a scholar associated with Tyndale House. But he has a wonderful paper online that you can get at academia.edu. It's called "Toward a Theology of Jubilee." I just heartily recommend this. It's really good stuff. So I want to read a little bit of this. Because I think what he says in this, believe it or not, he loops the raven and the dove into this whole thing about Jubilee. It takes a little while to get there, but it's really cool. So to appreciate this you have to realize that Jubilee and the Day of Atonement are intertwined. So James gets into the Day of Atonement in his paper about the Jubilee and the messaging of the Day of Atonement. And it's in all sorts of places. He has a section entitled "The Day of Atonement's Relationship to the Flood." So I want to read you some excerpts from that. He writes:

In the context of Genesis, the flood can be seen as a worldwide day of Atonement—as a sequence of events which purges and purifies YHWH's temple (i.e., his Creation). In Gen. 1, YHWH's cosmic order is established. [MH: It's his temple.]

Creation's elements are separated out and assigned their boundaries as a formless and disorder world is turned into a very good Creation. Yet, with man's fall, comes death, dust, and disorder. The events of Gen. 6 spell out the culmination of, and last straw in, the process.

The backdrop to Gen. 6 is the death brought about by sin, as it is in the account of the day of Atonement. The narrative proper begins with an account of a forbidden 'mixture of seeds' (cf. Lev. 19.19's cross-fertilisation laws). A group of angelic entities depart from their divinely-appointed positions and enter into the realm of mankind. Their intention (which they soon accomplish) is to mix their seed with mankind, i.e., to cross a boundary which YHWH alone can lawfully cross, since heavenly and earthly seeds may only be fused by God. The result of the angels' actions is, therefore, pollution. YHWH's spirit will not continue to strive with man on the earth indefinitely. The world's telos [MH: its end goal] has been fundamentally and dramatically disturbed, and purification must be made. The imbalance between the Creation and its original state is vast,

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hence YHWH's grief. YHWH even begins to regret his decision to create mankind; put another way, the tension in Creation results in an apparent 'tension' in YHWH's view of his Creation. The earth is filled not with Adam's seed (as per YHWH's original command), but with violence. The land is corrupt and in need of purification.

**Let me just stop there. James has a wonderful footnote in that little section about how the Sethite view just doesn't make any sense. So thank you, James. [laughs] But back to the Flood and the Day of Atonement stuff. So we have this descent into pollution and it needs to be fixed.**

As if in answer, a number of linguistic allusions to priestly activity occur in the text. A man without blemish [MH: this would be Noah] (a distinctly cultic term) is called out from the midst of the world's impure generations. YHWH gives his chosen (Noahite) priest strict orders: he is to construct an ark, to coat it with pitch (homophonies of the verb 'to atone') [MH: the word "to coat things" and the word for "pitch" sound like the lemma for "atone"], and to distinguish clean from unclean animals. (Later, these animals will be brought to Noah, as they will be to Israel's high priest.) [MH: Start thinking about the flood story and what priests do on the Day of Atonement. This is James' point. Look at these parallels.] Furthermore, Noah and his sons are to spend seven days in the ark before the flood (work of atonement) begins, just as Aaron and his sons will be required to remain in the Tabernacle for the course of their seven-day ordination. Analogies can also be drawn between the ark and Solomon's temple.

**I'm going to skip this part because he has a couple paragraphs of that. Again, it's just fascinating. To skip ahead, he says:**

Just as, on the day of Atonement, Israel's pollution is returned to the formless wilderness where it belongs and from whence Israel has been called forth, so, in the year of the flood, the world's pollution is returned to the formless deep where it belongs and from whence the land has been called forth. As such, the flood is a cosmic reboot. In its aftermath, a cleansed land re-emerges from chaotic waters.

**Just like at the beginning. Skip a little ahead again. He says:**

Further hints of the day of Atonement are also latent in the flood narrative. Consider, for instance, the two goats involved in the day of Atonement's ritual: one is sent into YHWH's presence and ascends into the heavens (in the form of an ascension sacrifice), while the other is sent out of YHWH's presence to a de-creational realm of dust and formlessness. [MH: Here's where we get into the birds.] Likewise, in the flood narrative, Noah and his family ascend into the heavens as the ark is borne upwards on the surface of the waters, while a fallen world sinks down into the depths of those same waters. The same pattern can be identified in Noah's

dispatch of a raven and a dove. The raven (an unclean animal) is sent out into a world still in the grip of de-creation, never to return. By way of contrast, the dove (a clean animal) remains in God's presence (in the ark) and later enters into YHWH's new Creation.

Now if you keep reading in this, he has a wonderful chiasm to illustrate the points of this. It's just good stuff. It's really good literary analysis. And to get to the point, in the context of de-creation and the creation (fixing the pollution, de-creation and the re-creation of the earth in the flood), it makes sense to me that the unclean animal (the raven) would not return, but the dove does. And the dove returns with the sign of life (new creation) and then goes off to live in the new world. So yeah, I think even the raven [laughs] plays a role in the theological messaging. So that's how I would answer that.

**TS:** Tim's next question is:

39:10

**When planting [a church], is ordination a requirement? Speaking of the laying on of hands or confirmation from the congregation or elders as my understanding is, "God ordains; men confirm ordination." In reference to church planting, is the biblical idea that churches can only legitimately be sent out from existing churches? Or can one be established without technically being sent out?**

40:00

**MH:** Yeah, so this is about church planting. I don't know (please pardon the pun) that the Bible ordains a specific process of ordination. That would be hard to demonstrate in terms of all the specifics (all the procedural kinds of things that we're used to today). But that said, ordination serves a pretty useful purpose and it makes sense. "Is the person doctrinally sound?" "Well, we think that's the case." So we identify with that person and commission them via the laying on of hands. So it's a public sign and a personal connection. Now having said that, I usually process questions like this by asking the negative. So let's say someone out in the hinterlands somewhere in the world feels led by God to start a church—a group of believers who gather for fellowship. They gather for encouragement, they learn Scripture together—all those things. And they help others. They do ministry and they do evangelism. And the group grows. Now if the Lord came back in the middle of all of that, do we *really* think that the Lord would say to the guy who started this church, "Hey, that was a nice thought, but your ministry was illegitimate. Sorry, no reward there! You weren't ordained." I don't believe that for a minute. I think it's nonsense to think that.

This is why, when I get these kind of questions, "Well, if the answer to this is X, then what else must be true? What are the exceptions?" And I think in this case, it's pretty clear. You've got some guy who doesn't have anybody to ordain him, any church body, even any individual church. He comes to the Lord. "Hey, I need fellowship." Maybe he's out there on the internet discovering what a church is. "Boy, we need one of those. I need to find other believers." Or "I need to win people to the Lord and then we can gather together." And he does that and it

grows and it's wonderful. It's a blessing. When the Lord comes back he's not going to say, "Dude, you weren't ordained. Sorry." That's ridiculous.

So that's the way I would answer the question. Given the absence of that sort of situation... In a normal situation where there are lots of opportunities to be ordained or have someone check your theology or whatever, I guess I'd want to know why anyone would have a problem with being ordained. Why would you seek to avoid it? What's the problem with being accountable to other believers and also being known by other believers who are in the ministry? You're letting them know that you're doing a ministry or starting a church. Because they could be helpful. They could be a sounding board. They can just have conversations, good advice. Why would you not want that? So it's a question of accountability and then help. And ordination, even an informal kind of thing... Some are really, really, really formal. Some denominations have long formalities (long processes) about this. What they're trying to do is they're trying to answer questions. "Are you doctrinally sound?" And so on and so forth. Just generally speaking (not talking about any particular process) why would that be something to avoid? And on the positive side of it, the benefits of an ordination sort of relationship (however that looks), why would *that* be something to avoid? I don't really see why we would want to avoid either side of that coin. So if ordination isn't possible in some contexts, I would say, "Don't let that stop you from starting a church. But if it *is* possible, don't run from it, either. So that's the way I would approach that.

**TS:** Alright, Mike. That's all the questions we have for today. So we appreciate everybody that sent in their questions. And you can email me at [TreyStricklin@gmail.com](mailto:TreyStricklin@gmail.com) or [Trey@NakedBible.com](mailto:Trey@NakedBible.com) with your questions. And we'll get them answered hopefully over time. We've still got a long backlog of questions to get to.

**MH:** We've got two more to go to hit the magic number of 40. Maybe you can look through and find all the questions that are about the number 40. [laughs]

**TS:** Yeah, I've got lots of time to do that. Let me just search my database of...

**MH:** Yeah, there you go. [laughs] It might drive you to drink. You know, so... [laughs]

**TS:** Hey now. [laughs] It doesn't take a lot.

**MH:** That would be my fault, right? [laughter]

**TS:** Alright, Mike. Well, we appreciate you answering our questions and everybody sending in those questions. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.