

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 326

Conversation Series, Part 3

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Guests: Roberta Scholten

Frank Hartmann

Douglas Kump

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Episode Summary

Recently Dr. Heiser reached out to his audience asking whether pastors who follow the podcast had tried teaching the content of his book, *The Unseen Realm*, to their congregations. The response was amazing, with close to 150 responses. The interest in sharing the experience of teaching the meta-narrative of Scripture to congregations stimulated the idea to have guest pastors and teachers on the podcast to tell us their stories. Join us as we listen to these people of diverse denominations and congregations talk about the impact of teaching biblical theology in its original context to their people.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 326: Conversation Series, Part 3. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

MH: Pretty good, pretty good. Looking forward to this.

TS: Yeah. This is our third part. I think we've got about five or six of these. It's interesting to hear how everybody's doing out there, first of all, and then also how they're incorporating the material and teaching it.

MH: Yeah. I just am always curious as to what people are doing with it. So I kind of like hearing that. And I always learn something, get a new idea, do's and don't's, that sort of thing. So yeah. I like testimonies just generally—people's stories. So this just has a natural appeal to me.

Well, we're back again with our third round of just having discussions with pastors or people who teach in or around the local church or just teach groups of

believers the content of *Unseen Realm*. This is in response to an email I sent out some time ago about, “Hey, has anybody out there tried this in an intentional way?” We got an overwhelming response, so we’re doing a few of these episodes. Because I like to hear people’s stories (and I know our listeners do too), like how... Not necessary focused on “How did the content help *you*,” but once you got into it and had a good grasp of it (there was a certain comfort level there), how did you start trying to teach it in your ministry (whatever that is)?” So we have four guests again. I’m going to ask each of you to introduce yourselves. Let’s just start with you, Roberta. Tell us who you are, where you’re at, whatever you feel is appropriate to share about yourself, for the sake of the episode.

RS: My name is Roberta Scholten. I’m in El Paso, TX. I am *not* a pastor. I am a person in the pews. But I read your email and I thought, just for the heck of it, I would tell you that people who sit in the pews can entertain the material without pastoral guidance. I was first exposed to your name, Dr. Heiser, reading a book by Cris Putnam on the supernatural worldview. He had a segment in his text on the Divine Council and he referenced your upcoming publication of *The Unseen Realm*. And my interest was immediately piqued, because this was a topic I had not heard of (the Divine Council). So he provided a link to your website. I went. I read *all* your material. I printed it *all* off, including other works by other authors, principally Amar Annus, and...

MH: You killed a lot of trees. [laughs]

RS: I did. [laughs] And I pre-ordered *The Unseen Realm* and *Supernatural*. And as soon as they came, I devoured them. I principally focused on *The Unseen Realm*. And I realized that my life had been changed forever, that everything that I’d had questions about in Scripture I would mark in the margins, “What the heck is going on with the angels? I don’t understand this.” And you had answered all my questions. And I shared it with other women in my acquaintance. And we just decided to sit down and have at it. We took over a year to go through *The Unseen Realm*. We used all your materials that you provided on More Unseen Realm. If you referenced dissertations, we read those. [MH laughs in amazement] If you referenced articles, we read those. I had read *Façade* and *Portent*. Right now I have a stack of over 12 of your books sitting in front of me.

MH: This is about the deepest dive that I’ve ever heard anybody take. [laughter] Wow.

RS: We listened to *all* of your lectures that we could find. We had a saying from our group, “This changes everything. But it changes nothing.” Because the gospel is still the gospel. The message of salvation is still the message.

MH: Yep.

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RS: But an awful lot of those questions that we had that are not readily entertained in study groups such as, “What’s up with the demons?” were answered. And I had also read all the apocryphal works, had encountered Enoch and spent a lot of time scratching my head.

MH: Wow.

RS: And incidentally, I just got your commentary on Enoch, too.

MH: Wow. That’s pretty remarkable, actually. [laughs] Let’s shift over to Frank. Frank, where was your entry point? Describe that for us a little bit.

FH: My name is Frank Hartmann, and I’m a teaching elder at my local community church in Boise, ID. I’m not on the pastoral staff, but I do teach adult Sunday Schools, Bible studies (especially to men), and I fill-in preach for when our pastoral staff does go on vacation or other things come up. I did go to seminary. I hold a Master of Divinity in Biblical Languages. And when I first encountered the book *The Unseen Realm*, I think I had read *about* it first, and I was kind of skeptical, to be honest. I thought, “Oh boy, here’s some far-flung suggestions.” But as I read the book, I realized that you were basing your conjectures on actual linguistics and language as it exists in the books (Deuteronomy, etc.). So that really overcame that hurdle for me—that you were not just throwing out theories, but that you were basing this on the way the Hebrew language was meant to be understood, especially by its original readers in its original context. So that really impressed me. I didn’t set out to *teach* a class at my local church on *The Unseen Realm*, but after finishing a long series of going through the books of the Bible last year, I was considering which book I should teach on next to my adult Sunday School class. I had just recently read a number of books from Dr. Daniel Block on Deuteronomy and the Torah. And I thought, “Well, that’ll be interesting. I don’t think most people in their adult Sunday School class curriculum usually get exposed to Deuteronomy and what it means in the Torah.” So I thought that would be good to go with. But during that teaching stretch I also incorporated the Deuteronomy 32 worldview, as you describe it in your book, to kind of give a good framework of exactly what Moses was talking about—things that Moses and the Israelites kind of took for granted that sound very strange to modern worshippers in evangelical Christianity. So I kind of folded that in there. When those chapters came up—when those topics came up—I would fold in some of those same concepts that you brought out in *Unseen Realm*. And that seemed to be very effective. Granted, most people at first said, “What?! Are you sure?” But I showed them in the language. I showed them the context. And the more they saw it, the more they saw that, “Hey, that’s right! This *does* work! That *does* actually answer a lot of questions that I might have had!” And I’ve found it to be very effective.

MH: Wow. Without naming any source or anything like that, where did you first hear about it initially?

FH: Well, I first found out about the book through Logos actually, because of your influence with Logos. And as a seminary student, I bought a number of resources through Logos. And so that was where I first ran into it, because it was part of your bibliography. But I didn't know much about you at the time and other works that you had done. So my first impression was, because it did have to do with the standard demons and spirituality and things, and that can be a very, uh, creative topic [laughter] in evangelical authorship, right? So at first, I thought, "Oh boy, here we go!" But again, the more I read it, the more I found that you're not speculating. You are basically anchoring it to what the Word of God already says, and that really made an impression on me. And it cast a sense of legitimacy over the contents of the book.

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MH: I'm glad you actually looked at the book, then. [laughs] Some people wouldn't. Doug, why don't you introduce yourself as well here?

DK: Okay. Hi, Mike. This is Douglas Kump. And I'm a pastor/theologian. And I first learned about your work... I was doing some research on the Trinity. And I was listening to some lectures on YouTube in reference to the Trinity and I saw your video on the Jewish Trinity. So I watched that. And that's the first time that I interacted with your material. And of course, shortly after that *The Unseen Realm* came out. And I wrote... I was a theology and media review writer at the time for a website ministry. And I wrote a review about *The Unseen Realm* because for me it was completely revolutionary. I had graduated from Bible college and seminary and it was really the first time that I had ever heard this type of teaching. So it was really revolutionary for me and I thought it was exactly important for people to hear this information—to learn about it. So I am a minister and teacher of a home congregation (or a house church). And I'm also a theology teacher. I've been teaching at a classical Christian school in the School of Rhetoric (which is equivalent to high school) for 15 years. So for the last two years I've been teaching *The Unseen Realm* material to my senior Apologetics class. What I've really done is integrate *The Unseen Realm* material (or the Deuteronomy 32 worldview material) into my Apologetics curriculum just explaining to my students how important it is to understand the spiritual warfare backdrop in reference to doing apologetics and evangelism. And I've been teaching it to my home congregation for the last two years. And the people are just both shocked and surprised—shocked that they hadn't heard this before and pleasantly surprised. And I just heard remarkable testimonies of how this has really brought a greater understanding of biblical theology to their entire worldview perspective. And it's just been a wonderful experience. My congregation has a lot of messianic Jewish participants and they've even never heard of this material. And one of the gentlemen who was part of my congregation was just so excited about the material of *The Unseen Realm* that he asked me to basically meet with him in private and do some private tutoring. So we did that for about two months. And he's really excited about using this material to reach out to Jewish people with the gospel and give them a better

understanding of the Two Powers and the Jewish binitarianism that's so clear, even in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible if you look for it and make the connections. So it's been a great experience both for my students and my congregation. And they just love the material and are really using it to, I believe, further advance the Kingdom.

MH: Wow. Glad to hear that. And lastly for this episode, we have Jason. Jason, can you introduce yourself?

JM: My name's Jason. I serve as a senior pastor at a small church in... I'll just put it this way: in the West. I was first exposed to *The Unseen Realm* really actually through none of your normal venues. But I had done my Master's degree and I was not good with the languages. So I skipped out of the full MA and went with the Masters of Ministry, knowing that I could work on languages later. And I picked up the Logos class, "Learn to Use Greek and Hebrew." And although I'm still maybe not very good with the languages, that tool, when I sat there watching you walk through the text and walk through... You did a Bible study of the word *sod* which is "counsel." And that experience made me go, "This guy (Mike Heiser), when he's dealing with the Bible, he's no-holds barred. He is dealing with the text as it is, dealing with the words as they're there, not afraid of the scholarship (the material), but doing a lot of his own legwork and then embracing the other material. And I was struck by that. And so over the course of time, what's happened is that I have gotten to the point where I just think, "I wonder if Mike has said something on this passage," "I wonder if this ties in to this with this worldview." And that *can* be a dangerous thing, when you always look to one person. But with your material, you're always well-resourced with other people. So there's a footnote crumb trail to follow. There are things of that nature that are always available for me to do my own research and work. So that really got me using it, so much so to the point, I can't say I've deliberately taught through a lot of the material, but just that question of, "I wonder what the ancient Near Eastern person was thinking. And I wonder what material is out there," drives my teaching and drives my preaching to really approach it differently. And it's fresh for my people. For some it's very fresh. For some it's very hostile. I've had people leave the church, and one of the reasons they cited for leaving was "I'm reading your books and that material is scary." [laughter]

MH: Right. [laughs]

JM: You know? And that was after I was doing a high overview of Bible doctrines. And I got to the section of the book we were working through and it was on angels and demons. And I told the people the first lesson, "We're going to cover the basics here in this book. But I've been reading and thinking about this for about five years. And I'm going to do two more lessons on this after this skeleton that we're going to cover this week." And I covered the Angel of the Lord and I covered the Divine Council. And I was putting... Like from Psalm 82, I put the morphology, just copy and paste, showed them right out of the Logos Bible

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Software on the screen. And I told them, “This has taken me a long time to get to this. And I don’t want you to come here quickly. I want you to see what I’m seeing and see what others have seen and see why this is what it is.” So two weeks: one on the Angel of the Lord, one on the Divine Council, and I was kind of done. There was another Sunday School class I taught the story of Naaman. And in that story, I titled the lesson “Sanctified Dirt,” and later I realized, “Oh, that was Mike Heiser’s title for that! I stole his title without knowing it!”

MH: Good for you. [laughs]

JM: So anyway, I realized I had been saturating in the material, which is really how you need to get it. So I don’t know if that helps answer some of those questions.

MH: Yeah, those are all... That’s a good introduction. These are all good introductions to how... I’m always interested in how people first come across the material. And then especially, when I sent out that email to my email list, I was thinking, “You know...” Because I get the question privately in email. Like, “I read your book and I’ve been thinking about this, and I listen to the podcast, and I want to be able to teach this to my people, but I don’t know where to start. I don’t know what to do. How can I do this without sounding heretical?” I get these questions. And so that’s what prompted the email to be sent out to the email list that all of you replied to. So I’m always interested in somebody’s individual story, but then especially people who are charged with ministry to other people, how... Kind of what people *do* with it. I hadn’t really asked en masse... I’d never sent an email out like that before, and I was hoping to get 7, 8, 10 people so we could do an episode or two. But it was just overwhelming. So now we’re doing a whole series of these. So along with your introduction, what I’m trying to get out of these episodes is how would you advise somebody who is sending Mike the email, “I *want* to be able to teach this, but I’m nervous. I’m scared. I don’t quite know what to do.” You’re all doing it. You’ve all jumped in somewhere. So if we can talk about... If that person was in the group here, if that person who is fearful was in the room, I’d like to hear about recommendations from all of you for what to do, what *not* to do, and then we’ll just take it from there. So how would you encourage somebody to get started and where would you recommend that they start?

FH: This is Frank. So what I would *not* do is to stand up in front of your audience with a copy of Mike’s book [MH laughs] and say, “Now we’re going to teach *The Unseen Realm* for the next 12 weeks (or whatever).”

MH: [laughs] Right.

FH: That is *not* what I would do. What I *would* do, though (and I think is vital) is to establish your credentials. To your congregation you have legitimacy. You have authority. And whether you are fluent in Hebrew or not (though that would

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certainly help)... It helped *me* because my congregation (my class), they know that I'm fluent in the biblical languages, so when I bring up points in my teaching, they know I'm not making stuff up. "This is the real deal. You can go find about it yourself if you'd like." So that level of authority of expertise kind of needs to be there first. Because you're about to lead them down a path that their first reaction is going to be, "What?! I've never heard this before!" And to be honest, I've read some reviews about *Unseen Realm*, and I know Mike knows some of them (he's responded regarding some of them on the blog) that basically accuse him of saying... They say, "Well, nobody's ever brought this up in the last 1800 or 1900 years. Where do you all of the sudden have new revelation?" That's clearly... They're not understanding the concepts. But the congregation might do the same thing. But they're going to be trusting in the presenter that they are not just regurgitating what's in the book (*Unseen Realm*) but that they have the ability to show them: "What are the linguistic reasons for these conclusions? What are the contextual reasons that this has got to be the way it is because this is what the writers of the Old Testament said it was?" And that level of authenticity is vital with the audience before pursuing this path of teaching.

MH: Yeah. And others, feel free to chime in here. But another way of establishing credentials (we'll put it that way)... You could also say, for a lot of pastors, "You need to realize that your people trust you, too. This is your ministry. You should have built bridges of trust already to people. And just tell them, 'Look, I'm still me. We adhere to our doctrinal statement like we always have. But we want to start thinking about some passages that may not be as familiar with you. Maybe thinking about them in different ways. But we're still who we are.'" Just to draw on the trust factor there. But again, I'd rather hear what you guys think. So anybody else want to chime in on that point?

RS: If I may. As a parishioner, and as one who has had a multitude of questions over the years, and as one who, from the very first time they sat down and read through Scripture in an unassisted format all on my own with only the Holy Spirit as my mentor, there were many things that I learned that were at odds with what I had been taught throughout my life. I ticked all the boxes in terms of Christian education and devotion to attending service. And when I started reading Scripture for myself and I saw the discrepancies between what I had been taught, what I thought I understood, and what was being stated in your text (and the materials that you provided supplementally), to say that I was angry would be a bit of an understatement, as somebody who was sitting in the pews for years and felt that I had been deceived—misled. And the level of disturbance (shall we say) was profound. And I was so grateful for someone to have the courage to actually articulate that this has been known for years but for some reason, it hasn't been put out there. Whether it's a function of fear or discomfort with biblical languages really is not material to somebody who sits in the pew. They just want the truth. And they don't want a little bit of it. Because giving a little bit is a very slick way to lie. They want the whole truth and nothing but the truth. And I felt very strongly that you *did* that in all of your works. And you backed up what

you said and your credibility was established by all of the supplemental materials that you provided. I was just overjoyed that someone would finally speak the truth. And all the questions that I had asked of pastors, of teachers, and the questions that I'd encountered as an instructor were answered. And they could be answered rationally, logically, and fully within the context of known scholarship. And I don't think you need to be afraid and treat your parishioners like they have to be packed in cotton and sent home to Mom. They can handle the truth. And it would be really refreshing to have it.

25:00 **MH:** Anybody else?

JM: I'll jump in if you don't mind. (This is Jason.) As a pastor, I think once you start transitioning into thinking, "I'm going to put this in my material. I'm teaching through this course. I'm going to touch on these topics from the Divine Council worldview or Deuteronomy 32 worldview..." I think one of the perspectives as a pastor is, "Yes, it's important you have the credibility established and your people know you and they trust you because they've seen you handle the Word and you're honest with it." But as you are leading people... I use the analogy of railroad tracks. Out here in the West, there are a lot of railroad tracks. And you will not find a steep incline. You'll not find a sharp curve. Everything is gradual. And the reason it's gradual is when you have a lot of weight and a lot of momentum, if you turn it quickly, you derail. And as a pastor we're leading people. And we want to be honest with the text. And we want to work through that. But the knowing that sometimes people are going to have hiccups and we're going to need to stop here and dwell on this topic a while or answer a lot more questions or dig in before they get satisfied with understanding that *this is* the right perspective. *This is* what the ancient Near Eastern people were thinking and viewing. And this is what the text says. So it's just a patience with the people, knowing that it's not going to change overnight. It's going to be kind of a long process. And for me, it started way back in 2005. So it comes out slowly. Not that you're hiding information. Because when I've given two copies of your books away to people who were eating up that type of thinking and material and I never received either copy back. Both people instead had marked up the books of *The Unseen Realm* that I gave them and they bought me a new copy. So selectively... If someone's interested, I will send them further and get them down the road. But at the same time, those who are kicking and screaming I'm not going to beat them over the head with the material. I'm going to just lovingly, graciously continue to teach and put it out there and just continue to be gracious with the material.

MH: There was somebody in one of the previous interviews that said one of the things that he had learned was that people have to be ready for the content. And *some* are going to be right where Roberta is at, like, "Just tell me the truth. I can deal with it. I'm an adult." [laughs] You know? That sort of thing. And then there are others that just reflexively are at this place where... I'm trying to remember how the guy put it. There are some people who don't feel like they're *allowed* (is the word he used) to think certain thoughts about angels or demons because

they are accustomed to essentially getting their theology or having their theology managed by their tradition, whether they're denominational documents or the history of their tradition. So because that has been really transmitted well to them (whatever tradition they're in denominationally), when they hear something different, they're naturally going to say, "Oh, well did so-and-so..." (And I'm just making this up. This guy wasn't a Lutheran.) "Did Luther say that? Did Luther talk about that?" They're just going to reflexively go there. And when they can't find a connection, then there's this inherent resistance or suspicion. So some people are just *there*. And to me, that's where *your* relationship with those people (a trust relationship) is really going to matter—that you can be honest with them and tell them, "Look. Here's what the text says. Here's where I'm at. But at the end of the day, even if you don't agree with me, I'm still going to love you. I'm still going to do my best to serve you." That sort of thing. But this is why I wanted to do these episodes. Because you all run into the whole spectrum that's out there. So Doug, do you have anything to add to that?

30:00

DK: Yeah, I never received any sort of negative feedback from either my congregation or the school that I work in. My congregation, like I said, just received this information with great excitement. I first started teaching *The Unseen Realm* material in the context of a series that I did on the deity of Christ and also a series on spiritual warfare. So *The Unseen Realm* material just gave them a biblical foundation for those topics that they hadn't had before and it really helped them make sense of the deity of Christ as well as the nature of spiritual warfare. And I always start with Psalm 82. In fact, when I teach my senior class Apologetics, part of their midterm exam is to do basically an exposition of Psalm 82 as part of their grade on the midterm exam. So again, I've integrated the material into my Apologetics class, so it's not like I'm teaching a course on *The Unseen Realm*. I'm just implementing this and integrating this material into a yearlong Apologetics class. And I thought for sure when I started teaching this material, I was going to be receiving email and phone calls from parents and getting called into the chancellor's office for teaching polytheism. But I'm very careful to make sure that I teach the proper understanding of elohim and things like that. And I've not received one negative email or phone call from any parent or any of the administration. And this is the third year that I've been teaching this material. I teach it pretty explicitly. So it's been well received. And I was somewhat concerned about that in teaching it at the school, but I was never concerned about teaching it in reference to my congregation. So it's all been positive. And I use the Bible Project in my senior class, and I think that that lent some legitimacy to the teaching as well. The students (these were seniors) really see those videos as being not only clarifying but also legitimizing the teaching. It really helps them visualize what I'm teaching. So it's all been positive for me. I've not received any negative... I mean, I have gotten tons of questions definitely, but nothing negative. So it's all been a great blessing.

MH: Is there a lot of overlap between the people in your church also being the parents of the students you have? Is there a great deal of overlap there?

DK: Zero overlap.

MH: Wow, that's interesting.

DK: I have a pretty large school where I teach. It's a church-related school so it's part of a local church. We have about 400 students. So I've been teaching there for 13 years out of my 15 years of teaching. And I've been teaching these same students... When I teach your material to the senior class, I've already taught these students for two to three years (Biblical Studies and Church History). So they're familiar with me; I'm familiar with them. And so it really is a matter of trust. And when I bring in the videos, it helps them realize, "Oh, wow! This is something that other scholars believe." And I do explain at least to them and my congregation that this is (like you say) mainstream theology 101. But it just takes a while for that to trickle down into the local church and to the mainstream evangelical church. But everybody's been excited about it.

MH: Here's what prompts the question. On a previous Conversation episode, there was a pastor who started out his ministry teaching the youth (middle school through high school). And I thought this was a great idea. One of the things he did was to prevent teaching... You give the content in the room and you've got a bunch of middle schoolers and high schoolers there. And then they process it in some way. And then they go back home and, "Oh, you'll never guess what Pastor So-and-so said today!" [laughs] And if it gets miscast or summarized poorly... He was afraid that he's going to get phone calls and, "What's this heresy you're teaching?" So what he did was he created a simultaneous blog for every lesson for the parents. It wasn't to summarize it for the kids; it was for the parents. So that was his way of saying, "If your parents have questions (or you have questions), tell them to go to the blog. And then they'll know what we talked about." So that's why I was wondering if there was a close connection there, that you kind of were able to head off one issue because of that. But your situation is totally different. That's actually quite interesting.

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DK: Yeah. I would have done that had I received any feedback. But I would say that I would never teach this material to middle school students. I do teach the middle school Bible classes as well. But I would not introduce this to those students. I am *sure* that I would get some feedback from parents if I was teaching it to seventh and eighth graders. [MH laughs] So I wait until the twelfth grade to do it.

MH: Okay. Here's another thing that I've been asking. For the person (the pastor) who is on the fence. "I don't know if I should or shouldn't." Can you recommend a specific topic or strategy to help that pastor get started? They have a different congregation. It's not yours. You don't *know* what their congregation is. But this person has come to you and said, "I know we both like the book and I know you're teaching it and doing well, but I just don't know." So how would you get

them started? What's a good entry point or a good topic, a good strategy, to help them get started? Anyone.

DK: I'd just say that in my case, I introduced this to my congregation in reference to teaching through a series on the deity of Christ and also spiritual warfare. Just like a course. It was a biblical-theological course on spiritual warfare. And then I did one on the deity of Christ. And of course, with the deity of Christ you can bring in the Jewish ideas of monotheism and binitarianism. And with the spiritual warfare, you can bring in this material, of course, that's definitely the foundation for properly understanding spiritual warfare. So that's the two contexts in which I brought it in. And with the school, it was apologetics.

MH: What I generally tell people is, "Find something that your people already hold dear and then either solve a problem related to that (or some criticism of that idea) or show how this can really reinforce the idea. They're already attached. This is something they embrace, so this can build on it." But anybody else? Topics? Passages? Strategies?

RS: Our times... Our culture is going through such a momentous upheaval right now. We don't know if anything will ever be the same again. And trying to get a handle on what's happening, dealing with the hostility that we see reflected in the media, the sharp divide in the culture, I think there are many questions among ordinary citizens. "What the heck is going on? This doesn't make any sense to me that people are so angry. *Why* are they so angry?" And I think the answer to that very much relates to those who have spoken to the issue of spiritual warfare. This is outright flagrant spiritual warfare. We may not be seeing the players in the background because they exist in the unseen realm and can only be spiritually discerned if you're gifted in that regard. Otherwise, it just reflects a great big puzzle. But this text and the associated materials brings those unseen forces from out of the darkness into the light of the testimony...

MH: Let's take two terms you just used and see if I'm hearing you correctly. So you described, essentially, alienation. People are angry. (The other one was "angry." We have alienation and anger. Let's just go with those. It's alliterated so it must be good.) [RS laughs] So we have these two things. So a concept that you could dip into the content would be just even a very basic thing like "God wants a family." This is why I wrote *What Does God Want?*, for people really at the beginning level, just a sense of family and how that gets you into talking about both worlds (the family God wanted on earth and the family God had in the heavenlies). So are you suggesting that we just take a look at our culture and try to tap into the anxiety and the questions that arise from that as good starting points?

RS: Most definitely. But something that is emphasized in *The Unseen Realm* is that God... Yes, he is sovereign. He doesn't need us. But he *wants* to work together collaboratively. He doesn't mind and he does willfully share power

40:00

(maybe not power) but *authority*... He delegates authority to those he's created. And even if they sin against him (i.e., those in the celestial realm)... He didn't take away the special skill sets that he gave them. They continue to function with those skill sets. We (those in the earthly realm) need to *know* that they still have those special skill and abilities and they're using them to our disadvantage, but that the Father has provided a way (warfare tactics, if you will). If you spent any time in the military, other than knowing your own military capabilities and armaments, the number one responsibility of a soldier is to know his enemy and everything that they bring to the battleground. So who your enemy is, how they came to be the way that they are, is essential for establishing some level of... calm. There's no reason for you to lose your cool, if you will, when confronted with a very hostile situation. The Lord has provided you with a way. You need to know who your opponents are. And you need to know how to deal with them—that you *can* resist Satan. And he *will* flee from you. You *can* rebuke them. The Lord *did* give you power and authority—or authority—over all the power of the devil. And it's okay. And he *expects* you to do that. That's more of his willingness to share, to involve us, in all that he's created.

MH: Anybody else? I think that's a good strategy, just to... I mean, I did it in a completely different way with the *Stranger Things* book. That was just trying to take something in pop culture *just* to get people into the conversation. But this is more... Because of the present circumstances, I think this is a powerful way to at least get people thinking on spiritual terms about what in the world's going on.

JM: This is Jason. For me it was... It took me a long time to be able to put what I was reading, like in *Unseen Realm* and in all of your material, into preaching and teaching. Because for me, there was a vast disconnect between it on a practical level. And I'm not saying that disconnect is there. But it took me a long time to get that heartbeat that God *is* involved in family. He has an earthly family, and in the unseen realm, what was and still is his family. And how he has a desire for us—to be with us. And that has become very central in how I think about it. Because if it's just... So much of the discussion (and even before I was exposed to your material)... People want to nuance the difference between a Watcher and an angel or a fallen angel. And for a lot of them, it's just nuance that seems more speculation than text-driven. And there are all sorts of theories and stuff out there. And it's all curious. But they don't always apply it to everyday life. And sometimes they're applying things that they got to from a speculative position anyway. So getting into the text, seeing it from the ancient Near Eastern perspective, understanding and diving in, but then realizing this is about God loving us and sacrificially giving himself for us... And he has never abandoned us no matter what force is at work. The Lord is with us and he has a desire for fellowship with us. And we have a hope of home in heaven eternally with him. So that, to me, has driven the practical side of this and made it much easier to bring it home with my people as I teach it through one aspect or another. Bringing it back to that point I think is crucial.

MH: Mm hmm. Anyone else?

45:00

FH: This is Frank. I'd have to concur with the others on the call that they have integrated the ideas of *Unseen Realm* into other studies. So as I mentioned, I did that specifically with a study of Deuteronomy. But it could be done with a study of the Psalms, including Psalm 82. It could be done in the New Testament as well. A good example is Jesus being tempted by the enemy. I find it very interesting the ease with which evangelical Christians today understand that the enemy is real—a real entity. They firmly stand that he is not to be just ignored or caricatured. But on the other hand, that's about where they leave it. He's the bad guy in the story and that's about where they leave it. So we've kind of already jumped over the hoop of "Does the enemy exist?" We have agreement that he is a created being, and a powerful one at that. But let's now go further into that, especially if you're in, for instance, Ephesians 6. The spiritual warfare going on. Let's delve into that: "What does Paul mean when he's talking about these and why does he talk about those?" I had a Bible study recently where a question about the Tower of Babel came up, and in relation to then Acts 2 and the reversal of the effects of the Tower of Babel. And so there are so many footholds—handholds—that I think a teacher or a pastor could use just to inject some of the basic framework so that it's a little bit here and a little bit there. And sometimes that'll prompt some questions and sometimes it won't. But the more you do it, the more this will fit into their overall worldview.

MH: Mm hmm. Well, typically the last question I ask is, "What would help..." [laughs] This is all... The suggestions are good. The ideas are good. But is there something that you *wish* you had or that would've been really useful that still doesn't exist? And I ask that because there are people out there who are going to be listening to this that *are* working on stuff. The content gets repurposed by people. And there are other people out there who are just looking for the right idea. And for myself, too. Sometimes I... I have a whole list of things I *could* do. I'm still interested in where the holes are, like what's missing that would be helpful. You have *Unseen Realm* and we did *Supernatural* at the same time. *Unseen Realm* was for the person who has some Bible under their belt and isn't intimidated by books with footnotes. And then *Supernatural* was for the average person in the pew. And then I went and did *What Does God Want?* on my own, just for the new believer or the seeker. And there's a stepping-stone there. In theory, somebody could start with *What Does God Want?* and then graduate to *Supernatural* and then graduate to *Unseen Realm*. That I can see. That is a nice progression there. But what I can't necessary see are where the holes are. So what do you want? What would you like to see?

RS: Just to get it done. Do something. I don't know how it is in other parts of the country, but here in far southwest Texas our gatherings are limited to ten people or fewer, so churches are canceled. And that attendance at church service, which many people feel is an anchor and provides them with some stability, has been taken away. How do they deal with that? How do they deal with the loss of

frequent Eucharist services? How can they handle all of these changes that are coming at a breakneck pace? So even if you do some kind of teaching over your church website or you have normally recorded sermons or messages, start something there. How to deal with the uncertainty of these times.

50:00

MH: It's really fascinating that you'd bring that up, because we just recorded another one of these and we had a guy on there and his circumstance was basically two church splits and/or failures. And he wasn't a preaching/elder person, but he'd been involved with the church for about 20 years. So it sort of fell to him to do something here. And they met and watched videos (Bible Project videos) and that's where he stumbled onto my content. Out of that discussion... That was the genesis for that. But it was like we all said, "Isn't it great that there's a lot of this content that is out there?" And in his case, his people were just not... It was hard for them to make that adjustment to calling "church" watching this video. But he said now three years down the road, it's like they've just grown by leaps and bounds. But then the flip side of it is, it still needs vetting. You know? There's a lot of content out there, but it still doesn't have the "this is a good thing to listen to" and "please avoid this label." So it's out there but essentially since the podcast has become more well-known, it helps. And the Bible Project, when they put something out then people, "Okay..." There's a trust factor there. There's a content payoff factor there. So I hear you. But it's just fascinating that you would bring that up, because we're just right on the heels of having done another one of these and sort of the same thing came up.

RS: The concept of vetting that almost everyone has spoken to is curious to me. Pastors are already fully vetted if they're standing in front of their congregation. That you would be questioned unless there's some...

MH: The other discussion was just since this fellow wasn't technically a pastor, they... How can I put this? They had to get over the hurdle of someone that they had not chosen to be their pastor and really wasn't even part of their group... It's just some guy on a screen. That was the difficulty. But again, to their credit, they trusted this guy to do that. But you're right. If we're talking about pastors just putting out content, people that already have the relationship, yeah, that problem should be removed. It's shouldn't even be there.

RS: Lots of times if churches have home cell groups (or whatever they're called) for small groups to study and have discussion and fellowship, people get thrown into that position. They haven't been vetted at all. And they find themselves dealing with content for which they are not prepared. But they struggle through it or they consider themselves mentors rather than actual teachers or leaders. But if the pastoral staff and those that they've, whether it's through whatever church government structure your denomination has, can go through their fellowship and find others that are willing to be trained with them and then go out and work through their home fellowship groups to maybe have opportunity for intimate discussions, that would be helpful as well, I would think.

MH: Anyone else?

DC: This is Douglas. This is actually a great time to be the pastor or minister of a home congregation or house church. And I think that this movement is growing and I think it's going to be really, in some sense, the future of the Church. But in reference to what needs to be done, I would like to see more people take your material and apply it to specific topics. For example, I am doing some work right now in applying the material of *The Unseen Realm* to the Marian apparitions. And I'm pretty shocked at how relevant that material is to that particular topic. And I'm also... It's basically all notes right now—my teaching notes. But I am developing a curriculum for the high school seniors that will be *The Unseen Realm* material applied to... We already have a curriculum for Apologetics. But I'd like to put that together in a more formal way. But I'd just like to see your material... Because you've already laid the groundwork, the foundation, the broad scope of things. But I really think that Christians, pastors, scholars, theologians, need to take your material and apply it specifically to topics. That's what I'd like to see done.

MH: It's one of those things, for people listening out there... Look, Doug, where you're at, you're doing that. You see the need to do that and you're doing that. Maybe that's something that can filter down in some way or filter out to other people. But people in the audience, that's a great idea. That is something that everyone in church leadership who has a good grasp of the content, you can do that for your people or your youth group or whatever. That's a really good idea. Well, I just want to thank everybody for sharing your time, for doing this. If there's anything you want to close with, feel free. But otherwise we'll draw the episode to an end. But anybody have anything else they want to leave the audience with?

55:00

RS: Thank you for asking! [laughs]

MH: Sure, absolutely.

RS: Thank you for the opportunity to let you know personally how incredibly life-changing this material is. And speaking for myself and the others in my study group, we are eternally grateful to you for your pioneering in this area. And I would encourage everyone who listens to the podcast: Don't be afraid. Step out into the great unknown, and the Lord will bless your efforts, with everything that you [Dr. Heiser] have provided.

MH: I think that's well said. Anything else? If not, we (Trey and I) are grateful that you took the time. I know sometimes it's tough to get episodes together when we have four or five people involved. But just thanks for carving out some schedule time and doing this with us.

DC: Yeah, thanks to you, Trey and Mike, for doing this. I really appreciate it. Your work is going out and it's causing a great revival, at least in my context. I'm very thankful for it.

MH: You're welcome. We try to be useful. And Lord willing, we produce things and let the Lord do with it as he pleases. As he wants to do something with it, he will. So thanks again, everybody, for meeting with us.

JM: Thank you guys very much. Love what you do!

FH: Yeah, thank you as well. I appreciate the invitation and all the different ways, through Memra and others, that you, Dr. Heiser, are continuing to spur on the laity as well as the pastoral people throughout the United States to keep up on those languages.

MH: [laughs] Absolutely.

TS: Alright, Mike. There you go. Another great conversation. We've had three of them now. We've got I think two more scheduled. So again, it's always interesting to see how people are taking the material and repurposing it.

MH: Yeah, absolutely. That's what we want to see happen. That's the kind of ripple effect that will really matter.

TS: Alright. Again, we want to say thanks to Doug, Roberta, Jason, and Frank for joining us today. And we want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.