

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 343

Q&A 41

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Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- Does Mary's virginity matter when it comes to Christ's divinity? Were the Jews expecting a virgin birth? And how do you approach the myth that Mary was raped by Tiberias Pantera? [Time stamp 2:40]
- What does the term "evangelical" mean to you? [30:15]
- What does the word "as" indicate in "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us?" [32:20]

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 343: Our 41st Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

MH: Pretty good. Can't complain. I'm trying not to segue into Fantasy Football, but it's a little hard. [laughs] It's that time of year.

TS: Yeah, don't stop yourself. Because that's where I'm going, too. I had a rough first...

MH: I'm playing Tim this week. I'm playing Tim in Week 2.

TS: Well, how'd you do the first week?

MH: [inaudible] shoutout to Tim in...

TS: Yeah.

MH: The first week I lost.

TS: If I lose to Tim, I'm going to go back and cut out all these shoutouts for Tim.

MH: [laughs] Yeah. The first week I lost. I just left too many points on the bench. I have the guys, I just didn't make good decisions. But the first week, it's like, are

they going to use this guy? How are they going to use him? So it's always sort of an "I don't know what to do" kind of thing. So I'm 0 and 1.

TS: Yeah, me too, Mike. Me too. How's the rain there? You all getting hit by some of these...?

MH: You know, we got... It rained *hard* yesterday for about 20-30 minutes, which is a little longer than usual, but... Like, my brother asked, "Are you guys getting the tropical storm?" And I didn't even know we had one. Maybe that was it. Twenty or thirty minutes of whatever. But it hasn't rained since. So if that's all it is, then it feels kind of normal. Maybe just ten minutes longer than usual.

TS: Yeah. Alright, Mike. That's all I got. That's all the chitty-chat I got for today. [laughter] I'm all out.

MH: We can't get too far ahead. We can't devote too much time to Fantasy. People would rebel.

TS: Yeah. Well, they'll just fast forward, so that's okay. They probably fast forward through the first parts of our podcast anyways.

MH: [laughs] They've already done that.

TS: Yeah. So... They probably don't even know I'm on the show. So, that's fine. [MH laughs] "Who's this guy asking questions?"

MH: Yeah.

TS: Alright, we've got some great questions this episode. Let's start off with Tim. He's got a question:

2:40

Regarding the Mary and Tiberius Pantera myth where it's rumored that Mary really was either raped or had an affair with this Roman soldier... Since a tomb was found semi-recently with the soldier's name on it in Germany and James Tabor wrote a whole book on it, there have been a lot of amateur people trying to use it along with its references in the Talmud and Origen's writings to disprove Christ's divinity and henceforth steer people away from Christianity. However I've only found two scholarly works on it (James Tabor and Ben Witherington). James Tabor claims Jesus was referred to as Jesus son of Pantera during his life. It seems hogwash to me, but I have no defense against it.

Were the Jews expecting a Virgin Birth as we understand "virgin" today? Does Mary's virginity matter in reference to Christ's divinity?

MH: Yeah, let's back up and go through the elements of the question as I recall them. I mean, there's very little written on this, which ought to tell you something. Maybe with the exception of Tabor, who's probably the only scholar (I don't know if I want to say "in the world," but that might not be an exaggeration) [laughs]... That might be the only biblical scholar that was positively predisposed to the Talpiot tomb being the tomb of Jesus and his family ten or 15 years ago, with Simcha Jacobovici, that was popularized. It's almost *Da Vinci Code* level stuff. But other than that one guy, basically this is a yawner for everybody else in New Testament scholarship. That really isn't much of an exaggeration.

5:00

The interesting thing about Tabor's work is his book is not a scholarly book. It's written for a popular audience, which leaves it vulnerable, on one hand, to critics. I'm going to refer our listeners to a specific article here. Again, there's not much written on this. But what is written on this idea (and specifically Tabor's work) is not very favorable to Tabor. Let's just put it that way. And so since that book (*The Jesus Dynasty*) was not written for academics, Tabor leaves a lot of things out. He takes a lot of things for granted. He presumes a certain amount of knowledge, (and more importantly, a good amount of ignorance) on the part of his readers, that he isn't going to get away with when it comes to New Testament scholars. And that's why there's been (a) little interest in the topic, and (b) those who have interacted with Tabor, it's not very favorable at all. And I'm trying to be nice about it.

You mentioned the Talmud and Origen's writings. Jewish sources pick up on this idea, I think, for pretty obvious reasons. They want to use the idea as propaganda against Jesus. The Talmud also calls Jesus a magician to explain away the miracles and things like that. So Jewish sources are going to use whatever they can to try to undermine this rival to their own status and their own particular belief system. So that isn't surprising. Regarding Origen's writings, Origen isn't quoting this or mentioning it with approval. Or like, "Oh, there's really something here." I mean, far from it. So it's a little... I wanted to sort that out a little bit just in terms of what's in the question. Let's not get the impression that this thing had lots of ancient support. It didn't. It had support where you would expect to find it, in people who were opponents of Jesus. They're naturally going to say stuff like this. And news flash: the New Testament has the Pharisees claiming that Jesus was born of fornication. They don't call it rape, but some other thing happens to Mary. That's their default way to tar and feather or tarnish the reputation of Jesus within the Gospels. So that idea generally is not new at all. And again, it comes from where you'd expect it to come.

So for those who are interested in this, I would say, I'm going to put this in the protected folder, but there's an article. Again, there's very little on this that's accessible. But there's an article by Christopher B. Zeichmann, and the title is "Jesus 'ben Pantera' (son of Pantera): An Epigraphic [refers to inscriptions] and Military-Historical Note." The source is the *Journal for the Study of the Historical*

Jesus 18.2. It's a 2020 publication, so it's pretty recent. Again, there just isn't a whole lot on this.

And one other note. The fact that there is an inscription that identifies a soldier with the name Pantera that gets associated with this myth, that doesn't mean that that's the guy. I mean, there are a lot of reasons to... He's not identified in any other way. Okay, well, we have the same name. Like, how many soldiers do we think might have shared this name, or whatever?

But if you read the article, you'll find out that there are a number of significant disconnects between things that Tabor is claiming (basically conclusions he tries to reach based upon very scant data)... There are a lot of disconnections between that and what he wants to do with them—the reality of the situation, the reality of the data. So if you're interested in that, I recommend it.

The other question is really about the expectation of a Virgin Birth. So the question was worded, "Were the Jews expecting a Virgin Birth as we understand 'virgin' today, and does it matter?" I think "expecting" is probably too strong a word for Jewish outlook on the messiah for the simple reason that a lot of the messianic profile was not clear anyway, by design. My view (and it's not terribly shocking), is if you actually look at the Old Testament and then the ignorance of the disciples... Even after the resurrection they still don't quite know what's going on, and the reason for that is not because they were stupid. The reason for that is that the messianic profile is never given in one place in the Old Testament. It's fragmented and scattered in pieces all over the Old Testament. And so there's no reason to suspect that *this* particular point of how things play out would've been transparent so that the majority of the Jewish community was "expecting" it. That's why I say I think that word is a bit too strong.

10:00 So on the one hand, if you go back to Isaiah 7:14 (and I'm hoping this isn't news to this audience), most translations will have, "Behold a virgin shall conceive..." and so on and so forth. If you actually go back to the context of Isaiah 7... I'm going to read it. Because it's kind of important. And I think the way Christians are insufficiently taught to read their Old Testament gets used against them on this point. So if you go to Isaiah 7, the chapter starts this way:

In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel [MH: that's the northern kingdom, so you've got the king of the north and then you get this other king from Syria] came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. ²When the house of David was told [MH: and that's an interesting phrase to hold on ("the house of David")... Isaiah the writer wants us specifically to have the Davidic dynasty in mind here], "Syria is

in league with Ephraim,” the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

So the king of Judah (David’s heir) is scared. And then he goes and he summons Isaiah. And they get into this conversation about this trouble and “What’s going to happen to us?” and so on and so forth. And in verse 10 we read this:

¹⁰ Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: ¹¹“Ask a sign of the LORD your God...

So God is speaking to the king now. Maybe it’s through the prophet but maybe it’s something more direct.

¹¹ “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.”

I mean, God pretty much opens the door for it. And he wants the king to ask for a sign to validate what has been said in the conversation up to this point. God is basically saying, “Look, don’t worry about these two guys. I’ll take care of it.”

¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” [MH: he’s trying to sound pious] ¹³ And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself [MH: this is obviously the voice of the prophet now] will give you a sign.

God asks you to ask for a sign and you don’t want to ask him for something, you’re pretending to be too pious to presume upon God, God gave you the chance, “Well the Lord himself will give you a sign.”

Behold, the virgin [MH: and of course the Hebrew word there is *almah*] shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Now everybody stops there, [laughs] which is part of the problem. Continuing in verse 15:

¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good [MH: in other words, before the boy is old enough to eat the curds and the honey in the preceding line], the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. ¹⁷ The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father’s house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria!”

Then he goes on about what's going to happen. So the point of the Isaiah 7:14 prophecy, if you keep reading and you go into chapter 8 especially, you realize that the prophesied child that was supposed to be born of the *almah* (ESV translates that as "virgin"), that's a kid that lived in Isaiah's day. It has nothing to do directly with Jesus or a messiah. The prophecy itself is for the king (Ahaz) and his people and the Davidic line. The Lord is saying, "Look, I'll give you a sign. The *almah* will have a child, and before that kid's old enough to eat solid food, your problem's going to get taken care of. Don't worry about it." So on the one hand, we have to keep this thing in context. If you were a Jew, it would be very normal for you to think of Isaiah 7:14 and think this thought: "Well, yeah, it already happened. God already gave this child. And boy, we're thankful that he did because the Davidic dynasty wasn't destroyed. It wasn't cut off." So if you just walked into a conversation with a first century Jew and you brought up Isaiah 7:14, they're not going to be thinking about Jesus or the messiah. They're going to be thinking, "This is history."

15:00

So the real question that we need to ask here is... Well, there are several questions that we need to ask. Because Matthew does use this verse as an analogy for what happens in the circumstances of Jesus' birth. So on one hand, it's easy to see how the Jews... (That's kind of an odd term too, like all the Jews had the same thoughts, which is ridiculous, of course. Like today, there's not one body called The Jews, just like there isn't The Christians.) But anyway, it's easy to see how the Jews didn't look at Isaiah 7:14 and think "sexual virgin" or "messiah," because of the way things play out in the book of Isaiah itself.

Now if you keep reading in Isaiah, the question is, "Well, who's the woman?" Because the kid is born for Isaiah's day. And so scholars disagree, based on certain things that Isaiah says in the next chapter. Is it the prophet's wife? Some people argue for that. Is it the king's wife? (Which adds a bit of mystery.) Like, how would Isaiah know that she either is pregnant or would get pregnant? You know what I mean? Is the term *almah* drawn or an allusion to an Ugaritic term for the queen (the king's wife)? And then that takes on a different flavor.

I mean, there are a number of discussions here. None of them directly pertain to why Matthew would use this as an analogy. I'm just going to give you a short list. The real questions are whether sexual virgin is a possible interpretation for the term in Isaiah 7:14 (*almah*). Another question: Is Matthew's thought valid—that Isaiah 7:14 served as an analogy for Jesus' birth and that a divine parentage was compatible with the messianic idea of the Old Testament? In other words, can you look at the Old Testament and come away with the conclusion possibly that the messiah would be the son of God (like there's divine parentage there, as well as the whole virginal question) and that this would have something to do with the Davidic promise and all this stuff? I mean, can you look at these Old Testament passages and draw these conclusions? In other words, are those interpretations possible for what you do get in the Old Testament, even before Jesus comes

along, where you can sort of look in hindsight and see what happens? So I want to take those apart a little bit first and try to do this as briefly as I can.

“Sexual virgin” is a possible meaning for *almah* in Isaiah 7:14. Any Jew who knew their Old Testament would’ve known this. And so when they’re reading Isaiah 7, since the identity of the woman is not clear, maybe the king’s... If she’s the king’s wife, she’s probably not a virgin, because they’re married. But if it’s some other woman, could we have a sexual virgin in view? And the reason why this is valid (this is a possibility) is because of the way the term is used elsewhere.

Now you’re going to get village atheists on the internet and people who just... Let’s use a published figure—someone that’s gotten a lot of play. I don’t even know if he’s still alive anymore. But Bishop Spong. He was the guy who popularized this thing about *almah* is not a sexual virgin. I guess he was a Catholic. I don’t know what he was, but he’s basically undermining his own doctrine. And “Oh, well, he’s a church guy, so he must know what he’s talking about.” Actually, he didn’t know squat. He doesn’t know what he’s talking about. All he needs to do is read Genesis 24. If you go to Genesis 24... How hard could this be? This is the Isaac and Rebekah story. So Abraham sends out his servant, Eliezer: “Go find a wife for Isaac.” And we know the story about how Eliezer encounters Rebekah at the well. So I’m just going to jump in to verse 15. So Eliezer has just prayed, “Lord, direct me. Give me this or that sign, that the woman whom my master should marry...” And we read this:

¹⁵ Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder. ¹⁶ The young woman [MH: That’s the Hebrew *na’arah*, which is just a generic description of a young girl] was very attractive in appearance, a maiden [MH: the term there is *betulah*] whom no man had known [MH: sexually]. She went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up.

20:00

Betulah is the more technical term for sexual virgin, and so Spong would say, “Look, if Isaiah 7:14 meant a virgin, they would’ve used *betulah*. That’s the only term that means sexual virgin for women in Hebrew.” Actually it isn’t. That’s what I’m going to show you here in a moment. It isn’t. But anyway, we have here Rebekah is very clearly a *betulah*, “a maiden whom no man had known.” And again, those of you who are familiar with biblical euphemisms know that “to know a woman” means to have sexual relations with her. There are any number of passages that use this idiom. So it’s very clear Rebekah in Genesis 24 is a sexual virgin.

Well if you keep reading Genesis 24 about the Rebekah story, this is what you run into. So Eliezer has now let the cat out of the bag, like, "I'm here looking for a wife for my master Abraham's son, and I think the Lord is directing me to you." He's basically telling her that he thinks God is picking her to be a wife to Isaac, whom of course she's never met. And he says in verse 42:

⁴² "I came today to the spring and said, 'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now you are prospering the way that I go, ⁴³ behold, I am standing by the spring of water. Let the virgin who comes out to draw water, to whom I shall say, "Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,"

Let her be the one. Well guess what? The word translated "virgin" there in ESV is *almah*. It's the same word as in Isaiah 7:14. And we already know from 10 or 15 verses earlier that Rebekah is a sexual virgin. Well, here the writer uses *almah* of a woman who is, in fact, point-blank a sexual virgin. So this tells you that *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 could indeed be an appropriate word that could be used of a woman who is a sexual virgin. So Bishop Spong (and the rest of his ilk) basically didn't spend much time reading their Old Testament. So that we can take off the table. Yes, that is a possible interpretation for Isaiah 7:14.

The other two questions. Okay, what about the link to a dynastic idea? Isaiah 7:14 is certainly linked to the Davidic dynasty, because it's about Ahaz and the house of David. So by giving the king a sign about this woman, God was saying, "Look, I am going to honor my promise to preserve David's line, which will in turn produce the messiah (the new son of David)." And so Isaiah 7:14 is indeed connected to the messianic promise by virtue of David's dynastic house.

Thirdly, what about a divine child, down the road? I think the answer... Yes. This is on the table, because... I'll approach it this way. First of all, a virgin birth is kind of a common idea in ancient religions for divine parentage (for what ought to be obvious reasons). So if you thought after the fact, "This kid is unusual; he probably has divine parentage because of this, that, or the other thing (some weird power or something like that)..." That was very common. If you were thinking about some prophecy in your religion that called for (here's the key thought) somebody who was more than a human mortal, you could very easily presume that the source for that kid (the fulfillment of that promise) would indeed be born from of the Most High, and then you get your virgin birth idea.

So I would suggest that this is on the table for a few reasons. A Jew who thought carefully about the covenants with Israel would realize that they were impossible for any normal human to fulfill. They're just impossible because a human is always going to fail and they always did in the whole Old Testament story. And so for this reason, I think Christ's deity certainly matters. He is the fulfillment of all the covenants. And I don't know how you get deity incarnate without the virgin

birth. So in other words, the result of a normal birth would be a normal human. So these things seem to go together, I think, pretty transparently.

Another thought is things said of the messiah in certain passages of the Old Testament do speak of more than human status. How can a merely human Davidic messiah be the referent of Psalm 89:29? The theme is the Davidic covenant. But it's in the psalm.

25:00

**²⁹ I will establish his offspring forever
and his throne as the days of the heavens.**

You know, that requires a little bit more than a mere mortal. So we have that issue. A mere mortal doesn't fit that. How about Daniel 7—the eschatological Son of Man? Especially if Daniel 7 is linked to the Baal Cycle—the kingship of the gods. (And it is. I've lectured on this before. People can find it on YouTube.) In this case the kingship is handed to the “human one.” That requires somebody that's more than a mere mortal. Again, I don't know how you're going to get that unless you have deity incarnate. And I don't know how you're going to get deity incarnate without a virgin birth. These ideas are connected.

And I'll throw one more thought in here. We cannot assume that early Judaism (forget Christianity—we're talking about early Judaism before Christianity) did not include the idea of a divine messiah. I mean, a lot of these people write as though Christians were the first ones to come up with this. Wrong. *1 Enoch*, for instance, certainly does. It speaks of the messiah's pre-existence (before they're born) in several places. So did the writer of *Enoch* not know his Hebrew Bible? I would suggest that he did. Let me give you an example. So let me read a little bit from the second volume of my *Enoch* commentary. I just turned in the manuscript. But this is my little header for 1 *Enoch* 45-57:

This section opens with the plight of the wicked, those who “have denied the Lord of Spirits” (45:2). They are juxtaposed with the Elect (Chosen) One, the messiah figure, who is seated to judge them. From this point forward, the messiah, a figure described by various titles (see the Excursus), takes the place of prominence in the Book of Parables [MH: which is this section of the book of *Enoch*]. He is described as pre-existent, the seated Judge, the eschatological ruling Son of Man, the Anointed One [MH: there's your word *meshiach*].

And then I quote Susan Docherty on this point. But here's a little bit from *1 Enoch* 48. I'm just going to read you the first six verses.

¹ And in that place I saw the fountain of righteousness,
Which was inexhaustible:
And around it were many fountains of wisdom;

And all the thirsty drank of them,
 And were filled with wisdom,
 And their dwellings were with the righteous and holy and elect.
² And at that hour that Son of Man was named
 In the presence of the Lord of Spirits,
 And his name before the Head of Days.

That's the Ancient of Days from Daniel 7. So there's this scene where the Son of Man, who hasn't yet been incarnate yet (this is the heavenly Son of Man) was named to fulfill this role.

³ Yea, before the sun and the signs were created,
 Before the stars of the heaven were made,
 His name was named before the Lord of Spirits.
⁴ He shall be a staff to the righteous whereon to stay themselves and not fall,
 And he shall be the light of the Gentiles,
 And the hope of those who are troubled of heart.
⁵ All who dwell on earth shall fall down and worship before him,
 And will praise and bless and celebrate with song the Lord of Spirits.
⁶ And for this reason hath he been chosen and hidden before Him,
 Before the creation of the world and for evermore.

Okay, that is pre-Christian *1 Enoch*. So again, if you have the village internet atheist who wants to argue these points (like this is a Christian invention), I'm sorry, but you might want to go back and read primary texts. That might be a good idea. What this shows you is that Jews (we'll use the generic "Jew" term), before there was a Jesus, were looking at passages like Daniel 7 and passages concerning the "anointed one" (the *meshiach*—the messiah) and interpreting them to lead them to the conclusion that that guy (whoever that is) has to be more than man, because he's pre-existent. And other things. So again, I don't know how you get that if you're not the Son of God, if you don't have divine parentage, which would indeed be quite consistent with a virgin birth.

Now that was a long way to answer those questions. But the questions are actually filled with misconceptions, not on the questioner's part, but on the thing that's troubling the person who asked the question (Tim, in this case). Because you will often see this discussed on the internet by people who have no command of the data. That's just the way it is. So I wanted to throw a lot of that in and go off on these rabbit trails, because I think they're important.

TS: Tracy has our next two questions. The first one is:

30:15

What do you mean by the term "evangelical?" This is a term that many people feel they "know," but I am not convinced that it actually

means the same thing to everyone. Would you please elaborate as to what it means for you?

Yeah, I would tend to agree with you. [laughs] Yeah, this is... I agree on its ambiguity. And today, honestly, its relative meaninglessness. I have what used to be the tried-and-true definition of maybe 30 years ago stuck in my head. So I'm old enough to remember when you could use the term evangelical and it *did* mean something. And so what to me it means is that you have someone who (a) understands the biblical gospel message of salvation by grace through faith apart from human merit; and (b) believes that message (the message of the gospel) is the only means of salvation—John 14:6:

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

[An evangelical believes] that all believers have been commanded to spread that message (in other words, an evangelical is someone who believes in the Great Commission); (c) approves the historic orthodoxy of the apostolic church, the content of things like the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the core doctrines of Christianity; and (d) believes the Bible is the inspired word of God (not *contains* the word of God, but *is* the word of God).

Now evangelicals have historically disagreed on how to articulate the idea of inspiration—certainly how to articulate inerrancy. Is that a useful term? It's associated with the term inspiration. I'm not worried about any of that for the sake of this answer. That's what an evangelical is, just in a nutshell. It used to be where you didn't have to walk through that. But today you do. So I understand what's behind the question.

TS: Tracy's second question is:

32:20

Regarding the line in the Lord's Prayer translated generally as "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," or "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," my question is about the "as." I have generally taken it to mean "in the same manner as," but I have also come to realize that it could also mean "at the same time as". Does the Greek provide any insight into which was intended? Both certainly would seem to be appropriate. Such a little word to mean so much...

MH: Yeah. I mean, the Greek is "as." The word is *hōs*. So the term is what it is in terms of what it is. Now the issue is, of course, semantics. And for those of you who have had a little Greek, if you wanted to look up something like Wallace's *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, which is a book on Greek syntax, this is going to be in the chapter on

conjunctions, specifically adverbial conjunctions... So if you wanted to look it up, you could. But Wallace discusses *hōs* in terms of its semantics. What is the possible range of meanings here? It's very common to take this as causal. You would translate it "because of" or something like that. Manner is very common. And Tracy sort of sketched that out, "the same manner as." You could also interpret *hōs* as indicating the result of something that's preceded. And then if you just keep going through Wallace, you're going to hit "temporal." And this pertains to Tracy's question about, "Could this particle mean 'at the same time'?"

And if you were looking at this, I would say maybe a good source for this... Those who have Greek are going to know what this is. If you go to BDAG, which is the standard Greek lexicon for New Testament Greek, they will include a discussion of the temporal semantic in relation to this particle. So they'll say this in the little section of their entry "Temporal Conjunction." And then they give page numbers to BDF, which is Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, another Greek reference grammar. When this particle is followed by the aorist tense verb, then if you think it's temporal, you would translate it something like "when" or "after." If it is paired with a present verb (like if it's followed by a present form of a verb), then you would choose to translate it something like "while" or "when" to create this sort of contemporaneous time situation. So if we were going to go... Let's just go to the Lord's Prayer here and take a look at what the options are. I'm in Matthew 6 now.

35:00

**"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,
¹² and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

Okay, so this is the line right here. So "as" is *hōs*—the particle we're talking about. And it's followed by... What's the verb form here? The text that the ESV is using is aorist. So you could translate that on the basis of this as, "Forgive us our debts, *when* we also forgive our debtors." So what it does is it sort of requires you to forgive people before God's going to forgive you your debts—that there's a symbiotic relationship here. If it was a present verb form ("forgive us our debts while we or when we have forgiven our debtors"), it makes it a little bit more contemporaneous. Now honestly, I think it's a bit of a distinction without a difference. Because the whole point of the passage is that God wants you to forgive people. [laughs] And because he's willing to forgive you, you need to be willing to forgive people.

So a little excerpt here to wrap up the question. This is from R. T. France, which is my favorite Matthew commentary. It's in the NIC series. He writes this. He actually discusses the semantics of this particle a little bit. And by the way, when you hear me read this, these are the kinds of commentaries, even if you haven't had Greek or Hebrew, if you just know the alphabet and you have a resource like Logos Bible Software where you can look up grammatical terms, or you have books like Wallace's *Greek Grammar*, his *Exegetical Syntax*, that you can search with software, you'd be able to understand the discussion. It would take a little work if you didn't have a year of Greek, but you could do it. So France writes... The good commentaries are the ones that engage the text. If you have a commentary that doesn't engage the text, then what good is it, really? He says this:

The *hōs* ("as") [MH: this particle] which links the two halves of this clause leaves open the question whether the forgiveness of our fellow-humans is to be understood strictly as a prior condition of our being forgiven. The variation in the [manuscripts] [MH: this is really interesting] as to the tense of the verb...

Now that tells you already that Greek manuscripts of Matthew 6:12, some of them have aorist forms and some of them are present tense forms. They're not all the same.

The variation in the [manuscripts] as to the tense of the verb...perhaps reflects uncertainty on this issue, the aorist tense properly indicating that our forgiveness of others is prior to God's requested forgiveness of us, while the present may be thought to allow a less precise relationship. But perhaps precision on this point is not necessary...

And here I'm with him, I mean, I love France's commentary and other stuff he writes, because he just thinks well in so many respects. I mean, he'll take you down these roads and talk with you. He says:

... perhaps precision on this point is not necessary; the issue is whether the forgiveness sought from God is mirrored in the attitude of those pray. In the parable of 18:23–35 God's forgiveness comes first, but is withdrawn when the person forgiven fails to forgive another [MH: actually just rebels—if you go back and read the parable, he has no interest in forgiving the other guy]. There is then something inevitably reciprocal about forgiveness. To ask to be forgiven while oneself refusing to forgive is hypocritical. Those who ask for forgiveness must be forgiving people, whether the offenses concerned are past or future.

And I think that's why I say, the semantic to me here (the discussion), is it manner (in the same way)? Of course it is. You're supposed to forgive people who have offended you in the same way that God forgives you. Temporal.

40:00

Whether it's, "Well, God really wants me to forgive them first, and then he'll know where my heart's at, and I won't be a hypocrite," or is it something a little more closely contemporaneous or simultaneous? Hey, at the end of the day, what God wants is you to forgive people. And he'll forgive you. If you don't do that, like France says, you're a hypocrite.

Now when it comes to the salvation question, that's a different question. We're not talking about accepting the gospel here. We're talking about asking God to forgive us when we do sin. And Matthew is really speaking to people who believe. He's not speaking to unbelievers in the Lord's Prayer. It's the Lord's Prayer! Okay? [laughs] He's speaking to people who believe. And if you don't want your relationship with the Lord disrupted by the sins that *you* commit that you need to own up to as a child of God, well then, you know, you need to do the same. Otherwise you're a hypocrite. And God knows and he's not pleased with that. He wants the same heart response out of you that he is going to show towards you. So it's a good question. It really... I like this question, because it takes you into the granular level of the text. Once you perceive an interpretive issue, like should I go this way? Should I think this, or that, or the other way? This is good stuff, because it makes you think about what you're reading, as opposed to your eyes just flying right over the text. So that was a good question. But I think at the end of the day, it's kind of a distinction without a difference.

TS: Alright, Mike. That's all the questions we have this week. Do you have any idea what topic we'll be covering for the next week?

MH: Oh, I don't. I haven't even looked ahead. I've got three or four queued up, but I haven't landed anywhere.

TS: Alright. Sounds good. Well, don't forget, you can send me your questions at TreySticklin@gmail.com. And with that, Mike, I want to thank everybody for sending in those questions and for you answering them, and I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.