

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 349

Q&A 42

November 7, 2020

Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- Why does Jesus refer to the book of Psalms when he's talking about the Law? [Time stamp 6:15]
- How do wars in heaven relate to the Lord's Prayer: "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven?" Isn't the Lord's will done in heaven? [10:50]
- What is the reason that Deuteronomy 27:5 has the Israelites being instructed to build an altar without using an iron tool? [12:50]
- Who is the queen in Psalm 45? [22:50]
- Is John 3:13 referencing Daniel 7? [29:00]
- How does one pray in light of the Deuteronomy worldview? How does one pray for the unsaved in light of freewill? Can you bind spirits for other people? [35:30]

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 349: Our 42nd Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What's going on (other than you losing in Fantasy Football)?

MH: [laughs] I know, it's pretty hopeless, to be honest with you. You know, I had such a good draft. I had two... Actually I don't even want to think about who I don't I have now. I had three solid running backs in the draft. One was Le'Veon Bell. He got hurt early, so I cut him. And then the other two are now on injured reserves, so now I'm literally looking for people with pulses. You know? I don't know if I'll win another game the rest of the year. It's just bad.

TS: Yeah. I really don't feel bad for you, so...

MH: [laughs] I know you don't. [laughs]

TS: I don't know what to say to that.

MH: Those are the breaks. You know?

TS: I hear you.

MH: If I'm undermanned, I'm easy pickings.

TS: I can't help but smile. I don't know why. [laughs] It is what it is. But hey, Mike, our poll last week closed. I just wanted to thank everybody that voted on our next book study. And Mike, you'll find it interesting that we had somebody from all 50 states in America vote.

MH: Oh really?

TS: So that's pretty cool. And then we had people vote in 77 different countries around the world.

MH: Wow! That's crazy, actually.

TS: That *is* crazy. We appreciate... South Dakota was holding on there for the longest time. Finally a couple of people voted from South Dakota. So if you're in South Dakota and you voted in the poll...

MH: ... you know who you are. [laughs]

TS: Yeah. Thank you. You were the last state to hold out, but we finally got it. But 77 different countries. That's pretty impressive. So thank you.

MH: Yeah, it is. Thanks to everybody who did vote.

TS: Yeah, absolutely. And a lot of countries in Africa. There are quite a few of them in there.

MH: You know what we should have done, Trey? We could do this I guess in two years or maybe four years. But little stickers that are the Naked Bible logo that says, "I voted."

TS: There you go.

MH: That would've been perfect for this week. [laughs]

TS: It would've been.

MH: This is why I'm not in marketing. I think of great ideas after they're too late.

TS: Yeah. Well, and the logistics of me or you having to ship stickers to 77 countries around the world. [MH laughs]

MH: Or just even in the U.S. Because it's the election here. Our "I voted" sticker would look different than everybody else's. So it might generate a... Okay, I'll

confess. It's a dumb idea. It sounded good, but the more you talk about it, the dumber it sounds. [laughs]

TS: It sounds good in theory, but then we'd have to collect addresses and then we'd have to... Like, I don't deal with stamps, Mike. I'm going to be honest with you. I don't write checks. I don't deal with the mail. If you're not online, I'm not paying you. So don't send me a bill. If you're utilities or anything else, I am not going to pay you if you don't have an online option. Because I don't write checks. I don't have stamps. And I'm never going back.

MH: Wow. You don't even do Stamps.com? (And they're not supporting the podcast. Maybe they should after this episode.)

TS: No, I'm not doing stamps ever again.

MH: Interesting.

TS: The days of having... I mean, I'm barely old enough to remember having to write out a check at the grocery store. And everybody's sitting there waiting to get checked out, and you have to fill out your check. You know. It's amazing how the world...

MH: I still pick those lines. I manage to pick those lines, when people are taking out a loan, you know, filling out a loan application at the grocery store.

TS: Oh, no, now you can just scan it. Better yet, you can just get it delivered to your house. I'm all about online stuff.

MH: So you don't want to watch the lady in front of you pull out a wad of coupons? Like there's 300 coupons?

TS: No. No. I will literally just abandon my basket and leave all my stuff there and walk out of the store. I am not...

MH: Abandon ship. [laughs]

TS: But I appreciate the concept of the coupons. Those people who do the coupon thing and they buy in bulk. They make some great savings. But then you've got a basement full of five Tides, 17,000 soaps, 47 toilet papers (which is good). But you know...

MH: Then they can go digital and sell that stuff on eBay...

TS: To me!

MH: ... especially when there's another panic. [laughs]

5:00

TS: Yeah, and then if they home deliver it, I'll be your first customer.

MH: Yeah, there you go.

TS: Alright. Well, Mike, we've got some good questions here. I'll bet the people would rather hear you answer questions than talk about Fantasy and grocery shopping with checks.

MH: I don't know. I don't know. It's good stuff. [laughs]

TS: Maybe we could just do an entire episode one of these days of nothing but that kind of talk.

MH: Just follow Mike to the grocery store.

TS: Yeah.

MH: I'm the line with the coupon lady and then the receipt thing (the paper) runs out, and of course there's something that doesn't have a bar code. I'm all that. That's what I do.

TS: There you go. Well, not me. [MH laughs] Alright, well, how about we just get to the questions, Mike? We stink at the other stuff.

MH: Sounds good.

TS: So let's just get to the Bible stuff [MH laughs], at what we're good at. Alright. This one's from Phillip and he has a question about one word: Law.

6:15

In John 10:34... Jesus says, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?" Why does Jesus refer to the book of Psalms under the category of Law? I looked at the word and it can mean custom, or the Pentateuch, or Old Testament in general. None of them really fit a book like Psalms. Is there something deeper going on here or am I just being too curious?

MH: Well, you sort of answered the question already. If it can refer to the general Old Testament (the Psalms are in the Old Testament)... So there you go. But to drill down a little bit more, that phrasing happens elsewhere. You get it in John 12:34, John 15:25. You get it in Paul (1 Cor 14:21). And when this term is used (that could be translated "law," obviously), the usage in these cases refers to the Old Testament in general, as Phillip pointed out in his question. And it's sort of the idea of referring to any part of the Old Testament as the rule or authority for doctrine in life. This was their sacred Scriptures, since the Hebrew Bible is inspired. So they could (and did) use this word in that sense. "This is our general

rule for faith and practice,” so to speak. The same thing is found in rabbinic writings. So in contemporaneous sources or sources a little bit later, you’ll find this. In C.K. Barrett’s commentary (I think it was him), he makes a note about the Corinthians passage, where he cites the fact that rabbinic literature will use Torah sometimes to cover the whole Old Testament.

I looked this up in TDNT (the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*) because I wanted to see what they said about the term. You usually get really long articles in that thing, so I’ll just quote a little portion from TDNT. It makes the note that Paul likes to associate a verse or an idea from the Torah together (like he combines that) with a passage from the prophets, which is an approach that is found in rabbinic material. And TDNT actually has a grocery list of rabbinic passages where this is done. But the idea is that Paul or the New Testament writer is going along and he essentially combines an idea from Torah while he’s citing something else, because the prophet (or whatever passage is in question in these instances) is also drawing something from or expressing an idea that is found in the Torah anyway. So in this case in Psalm 82, it’s a pretty clear reference. You’re not going to find “Ye are gods” in the Torah, so it’s a little bit different. But the practice of generally using the term “law” to refer to other parts of the Old Testament... Because all of the Old Testament was *instruction*, which is what Torah means: instruction. And *binding* means it had authority for doctrine and practice. TDNT also makes the comment that... He refers to Simeon ben Azai, a rabbi, and this is what’s said about him in the rabbinic writings:

...who sat and expounded and correlated the sayings of the Torah to the sayings of the prophets, and the sayings of the prophets to those of the writings [MH: that’s where you’d find the Psalms]: a fire flamed round about him and the sayings of the Torah rejoiced as on the day when they were given at Sinai.

10:00 So it’s kind of like... If you’ve ever read rabbinical writing, that’s kind of what it always sounds like—this fantastical, glorious thing that whatever rabbi is doing at any time, they’ll dress it up with language like that (“fire flamed about him”). Pardon my skepticism there. They want to not only glorify their teachers in their history (in their rabbinic writings) but in this case, they actually make a helpful observation—that this was a common way to think. So it leaks out into the New Testament. So there’s nothing odd about it. To our ear it’s odd because we’re used to thinking “Law, Prophets, Writings,” and we don’t have a history in terms of the way our authorities (i.e., in their case, the rabbis) would cite the Old Testament using the same terminology.

TS: Keith has our next question:

10:50 **I always assumed that in the Lord's Prayer "on earth as it is in heaven," meant that the Lord's will was done in heaven, but that human rebellion on earth meant that it was not achieved on earth, at**

least not at this time. Yet, the sin of the watchers, "war in heaven," and other language bucks against this understanding. What is the proper understanding?

MH: Yeah, I think we have a little bit of a conflation here. When I hear "sin of the Watchers," I think of Genesis 6. And there's no "war in heaven" described with respect to the Genesis 6 event. I mean, there is a transgression, but my point is you don't get the "war in heaven" language there.

But setting that aside, the Lord's Prayer expresses the desire that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. So it's pretty clear in that respect. The idea is that God... The prayer expresses the desire that God be king on the earth as he is in heaven. It's a prayer that expresses a wish, looking forward to that day. And obviously, rebellion is what has led to the disconnect and impedes that vision from being accomplished, at least at the present time. But rebellion doesn't and won't prevent it. Hence the prayer is just expressing the desire. There's no sense in the passage that it's not going to happen. It just expresses the desire of the heart that it will happen soon. But it's a wish. It's a prayer. It's a desire. So I think the meaning of it generally is pretty clear. But I don't see anything really having to do with the Watchers in the language here or in the circumstances that the rule of God is being impeded. I don't see anything specific, in other words, that goes back to that episode.

TS: Derek has our next question:

12:50

What is the reason that Deuteronomy 27:5 has the Israelites being instructed to build an altar without using an iron tool? I see where Exodus 20:25 states that altars will not be made of hewn stone because stones are made profane or polluted when hewn. Commentaries mostly skip over the reasoning though some suggest it might lead to accidental idolatry. The Watchers passing technology to man came to my mind and wondered what Dr. Heiser's thoughts were on the prohibition.

MH: Yeah, generally, I don't think this derives from the episode of the sin of the Watchers, as metals could be and were used legitimately by Israelites in lots of other contexts. It's an interesting verse, though. Deuteronomy 27:5 has this instruction where the altar is to be built from stones unhewn—stones in their natural state. They are uncrafted, unhewn. They're not touched in any way or fashioned in any way. And this actually follows the rule earlier in Exodus. Exodus 20:25 has the same thought. I'll just read Exodus 20:25 (the earlier reference here), just so people can be aware of that other one.

²⁵ **If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones, for if you wield your tool on it you profane it.**

15:00

It actually gives a reason there. But the question is, “Well, how?” So I looked this up in a couple of commentaries just to see what they would say and they all basically said the same thing. Tigay is pretty blunt. “The reason for the prohibition is uncertain.” [laughs] That’s essentially what they all say: “We don’t know.” But I have an article on this. I’m going to read a little bit from this article. It’s Saul Olyan, who is known for lots of things in Old Testament study, lots of ritual stuff and even angelic stuff, at least in rabbinic material. But Olyan actually produced an article on this. It’s called “Why an Altar of Unfinished Stones? Some Thoughts on Exodus 20:25 and Deuteronomy 27:5-6.” And this is from a scholarly journal abbreviated ZAW (*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*). It’s a German journal, but this article is in English. It’s from 1996. He writes this. Here are just a few excerpts that I think are kind of interesting.

Scholars have long noted the ban in the Book of the Covenant! (Ex 20,25) and Deuteronomistic materials (Dtn 27,5—6; Jos 8,31) on the use of “finished stones” (ashlar) for building Yhwh’s altar of burnt offerings, but a satisfactory explanation for the interdiction has yet to be presented. Most treatments either avoid the issue entirely [MH: yes, that’s true] [laughs], or offer one or two possible solutions, often without much conviction [MH: that’s also true]. Some scholars have suggested that the proscription on finished stones represented an attempt to keep Canaanite or other supposedly “alien” elements out of the Israelite cult others have argued that cutting stones causes them to lose a presumed “numinous quality”; still others have proposed that finished stones were prohibited on account of their luxury [MH: well, okay, they’re more expensive]. It has also been suggested that the ban has associations with a “semi-nomadic form of life.” Finally, there are those who do not take any firm position.

None of these theses — so common in the literature — adequately addresses the problem. Not one has been convincingly argued.

And so what he’s going to do is he’s going to try to unravel this. So he says here:

Perhaps the most engaging explanation thus far is that of Roland de Vaux, who asserted regarding Ex 20,25 that the text says:

And then there’s a quote by de Vaux. He wrote in French, so this is my internet translation here of de Vaux’s quote:

The idea that iron “profane” stone, which is explained by the general concern to use it for the service of God only... You should only use things in the service of God in their natural state, before they’re used by humans.

So that’s essentially what de Vaux is saying. Now Olyan says:

De Vaux identifies the preservation of the “natural state” of [MH: something] used in the cult as the underlying general concern behind this proscription...

I think he’s onto something here because of the comment in Exodus 20:25 about “if you use hewn stones then you profane them.” So there’s something about natural state versus something worked on that profanes them. And Olyan goes on to say that de Vaux would argue that human agency was the source of defilement. And de Vaux cites Numbers 19:2, Deuteronomy 21:3-4, and 1 Samuel 6:7 in support of the assertion each of those passages concerns an ox fit for sacrifice or ritual slaughter *because* it has never had a yoke put on it. So it hasn’t served any human use.

Like the stones of the altar, the ox has never been defiled by human agency it exists in its natural state.

So Olyan says, “Well, I think he’s onto something. It’s interesting.” But he takes a slightly different tack. I’m just going to read his conclusion, because I think it’s interesting. He says:

De Vaux’s paradigm does not explain all of the relevant data cogently. Neither the loss of the “natural state” nor human agency as the source of defilement effectively elucidate all of the evidence pertaining to defilement and its avoidance in the cult: not all sacrificial animals in their “natural state” are acceptable to Yhwh [MH: so there’s that]; not all defilement to be kept out of the cultic sphere is the result of human agency!

So there’s that inconsistency.

I suggest that the proscription is more convincingly explained as one expression of a concern broadly attested in various biblical sources [MH: and that is]: to separate the deity and his space, conceived as holy, from forms of *physical alteration* understood to produce defilement (ל ל ה) of that space...The paradigmatic notion of “wholeness” and “completeness” [MH: in other words, a dearth or absence of defiling alterations] as characteristic of holiness, developed by Mary Douglas [MH: a very famous scholar on Levitical thought] with regard to the bodies of sacrificial animals and priests may be applied more broadly to include the stones of the altar and the temple, and anchored firmly in a philological [MH: exegetical] analysis of the range of [MH: the terms used in the passage].

20:00

So in more standard English, what he’s saying is, “You know, de Vaux is on to something here, but we need to think of it more broadly that, if you...” [sigh] How can I summarize this? He’s saying, “This is one means by which a deity’s sacred space and common space are distinguished.” If it’s common space used by

humans, well then humans have done things to it to make it their living space, whereas in sacred space you don't do that. You use things that you don't have to change. It's kind of like a creation order argument. So basically, tying this in with priests and animals in Douglas' work, she is one who would argue that the reason why certain things are prohibited is because they lack something. There's some imperfection in it. So the idea would be that if you take a stone and you chip away at it, the stone is losing something. It's now not in pristine form. So think of the concept of something being in pristine form. And so that idea of keeping it complete and whole is the thought behind these prohibitions. I don't know if that's completely correct. I mean, it makes sense within the wider system of the way Leviticus presents a distinction between sacred and profane, something whole, something that has lost something. Those are broad principles that work throughout the Levitical system.

So what Olyan is saying is, "We should apply the same idea here." And it makes sense. But again, I haven't looked at it enough. Other than this question, I've never really examined it. But if Douglas... Her work isn't perfect. She doesn't answer every quandary in Leviticus. But I will say this for her (and other scholars have said it, too), she answers most of them. So I think it is a general good idea to apply her perspective here (the findings) to get some consistency in these ritual regulations. I think it's a good strategy and at least in my head right now, that makes sense.

TS: Charles brings forth our next question.

22:50

The throne room scene in Psalm 45 mentions a queen. Roman Catholics say the queen adorned in gold from Ophir in Psalm 45 is Mary, and Protestants tend to say the queen in Psalm 45 is the church. I feel there is maybe some much better explanation, but haven't been able to think of one. This is a throne room scene; is there any divine counsel theology that has a better answer?

MH: Yeah, I don't think there's anything specific Divine Council-wise in here. So that's the easy part. The normative word for "queen" in the Hebrew Bible (*malcah*; it's used 35 times) is *not* in the passage. In 45:9 we have *shegel* (it's used twice in the Hebrew Bible; the other time is in Nehemiah 2:6). So the question is, "Is there any significance to this term as opposed to using the normal term for queen?" Well, HALOT (a Hebrew lexicon) has the term being drawn from Akkadian *ša ekalli*. (You can hear the similarity between *shegel* and *ša ekalli*.) Later Hebrew uses the plural of *shegel* to denote "women who sleep around" [laughs] so some scholars actually speculate the term denotes the king's consort, or maybe a wife to be (but somebody who's not actually the queen). Maybe it's a woman he's already slept with.

Now you could sort of use Esther here as an example. If you read Esther 1 closely, she moves from the place where the virgins were kept and then she has her night with the king, and then she's put in a different place where the

concubines are. This is just the way things were done in the Ancient Near East. This is how kings approached women. So if we want to think, “Well, this is David in Psalm 45. David wouldn’t do that!” well, let’s try to remember Bathsheba. Let’s try to remember David’s non-refusal of taking Saul’s wives (and, of course, David’s taking multiple wives of his own choice). All that is to say, if you want this to be Mary or the Church, this is going to get pretty messy. [laughs] It’s a good example of trying to force an Old Testament passage to do both Catholic and Protestant theology. Okay, let’s try to not do that. Because it’s very easy to pull one point out of a passage and say, “Oh, look, that’s Mary!” “Oh, it isn’t! It’s the Church! The Church is the Bride.” Well, if you actually [laughs] sort of put it back into its own world, things can get pretty messy pretty quickly, so let’s try not to do that.

Now I would recommend... My go-to resource on Psalms has become Goldingay’s three volumes. They’re technical, but they’re just quite good. So I’m going to refer to him here. Goldingay notes that to this point in Psalm 45 (if you’re reading through the psalm), the marriage has not yet occurred, so this woman here in the picture may refer to the potential bride who is not yet the queen, in which case we wouldn’t have a queen, obviously. They’re not married yet. The king has to marry you for you to be the queen. They’re not married yet, so we don’t have a queen. Goldingay translates the term *shegel* as “great princess” and the context makes sense in that regard. Here’s what he writes:

So far there has been no mention of a wedding, and there is no need to interpret vv. 8–9 as relating distinctively to a wedding scene... The great princess/queen [MH: because in his mind there is a queen in the picture—just bear with me here] is probably not the bride but the queen mother, who will now address the bride (in vv. 10-13).

So if you’re listening, what you need to do is look at Psalm 45. And the presumed reference to the queen (even though we don’t have the normal word for queen) is in verse 9. Goldingay is saying, “That’s not actually the queen. It’s a different woman. It’s the woman who’s going to be the bride. And then this woman gets addressed in verses 10-13 by somebody else.” And Goldingay thinks it’s the queen mother because of what’s said in verses 10-13. Now if you read it that way, I’ll admit it does make sense, even though we don’t have anything explicitly in that regard. This is a technical commentary. Goldingay wants to translate “daughters of kings” earlier in verse 9 as singular (one daughter) due to parallelism with *shegel* in the next line. Now it *is* grammatically possible to do that, but it’s beyond the scope of this podcast to get into ancient Semitic morphology and why Goldingay could have a point there.

My point for this episode is that what this all means is that it’s far from certain that we have a queen (a king’s wife)... Because if it’s the queen mother, it’d be his mom, alright? It’s far from certain that we have a queen in the *shegel* of Psalm

45:9. So it's pretty unwise to build theology on a thing that you don't know is even there.

Now personally I don't think... It's pretty obvious I'm not with the Catholics here. Because Psalm 45 is not about Mary. It's not about Catholicism. We don't even know if we have a queen there, for one thing. But also I don't think either Catholic or Protestant approaches really honor the context of the psalm. The context is the Israelite king. It doesn't have the Church or Mary or even Jesus specifically in view in its own context. When it gets quoted in the New Testament by Jesus to befuddle the Pharisees and then point to his status as the Davidic king, there's no comment on the queen. If we want the analogy... If we want to try to go with this analogy, then let's press the other points. If we have a queen here, well then who are the ladies in waiting? Are they believers? Are the believers only women? Or are only women believers? Who are the people of Tyre in the passage? Then we can always loop back to the messiness of kings and the women they want to marry or who are just consorts, or what's their status in the harem. Again, it is very unwise to make this passage do Mary theology or do Church theology. So hopefully that's sufficient for the sake of this episode.

TS: Christopher has a question:

29:00

In the King James Version reading of John 3:13, we see the “son of man who is in heaven.”

1) Is it possible this is the correct reading?

2) If so is this a reference to the Son of Man of Daniel 7?

MH: Well, I think it certainly could be a reference to the son of man of Daniel 7 regardless. You could have the son of man in Daniel 7 referenced regardless of whether you accept the phrase “son of man who is in heaven” or just take the shorter version of that. That's going to sound pretty odd. But I'll try and explain. Let me just read what Metzger says on this verse in his textual commentary, because he's one of the editors of the United Bible Society Greek New Testament. He says:

30:00

On the one hand, a minority of the Committee preferred the reading ἀνθρώπου ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ...

Which basically means... You have the word “man” (*anthropos*) the one who is in heaven—the son of man in heaven. So a minority of the Committee preferred that reading...

... arguing that (1) if the short reading [MH: just “son of man”], supported almost exclusively by Egyptian witnesses, were original, there is no discernible motive that would have prompted copyists to add the words [MH: “the one who is in heaven”] ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, resulting in a most difficult saying (the statement in

[John] 1:18, not being parallel, would scarcely have prompted the addition); and (2) the diversity of readings [MH: the fact that you have different readings] implies that the expression [MH: the son of man, the one who is in heaven] ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, having been found objectionable or superfluous in the context, was modified either by omitting the participial clause...

Blah blah blah blah blah. What you have here in English is that if you go to John 3:13... I'm just going to go there. We'll see what ESV has. See what ESV does with this. Here it says:

¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

Then it has a footnote:

After “the son of man,” some manuscripts add “who is in heaven.”

(The one who is in heaven.) So does the original text just say “son of man,” or does it say “the son of man who is in heaven”? So you have to make a choice. And so what Metzger is saying is, “To add it makes it kind of difficult, so why would anyone have added it? Usually what scribes tend to do is they tend to take a difficult passage and try to simplify it for readers.” Okay, well, sure. And the other side would say, “Well, the more difficult reading is often therefore the correct one, so...” This is how the two sides go back and forth. The honest answer is, it could be either. Nobody really knows for sure because they're just trying to sort of do logical rules. “What would a scribe do or not do when it comes to deciding, ‘Is the short version correct or is this addition correct?’” I would say this. The phrase is indeed difficult, to say “the son of man who is in heaven.” Let me go back and read John 3:13, just to have it ring in your head again, and I'm going to add the addition here.

¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man [who is in heaven].

Think about that. Do it again. “No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the son of man who is in heaven.” Well, it doesn't make much sense. The addition (the longer version) doesn't make a whole lot of sense. Why? Because the son of man Jesus is talking about is himself, and he's on earth, not in heaven. So why would he be talking still about a son of man who *is* in heaven? If it's him, he's not in heaven anymore, he's on earth. [laughs] Either way, since you have the phrase “son of man,” I think that you can loop Daniel 7 into this, because Jesus is applying this to himself. And you'll see this in other passages. I don't think every reference to son of man is pointing to Daniel

7. Really, far from it. But I think there are occasionally passages where the phrase is used that it does.

So to add this phrase or to argue that it's original... I mean, some people would say, "It's definitely original because it's kind of weird. It's difficult." One of the cardinal rules among textual critics is that the more difficult reading is the one to be preferred because scribes would tend to simplify. Okay. That's a rule that you just made up. I mean, it's a reasonable rule, but it doesn't make us omniscient. [laughs] Like, it's not the law of the Medes and the Persians. Ultimately, we don't really know. But again, what I will say is that it really is kind of odd to be there. So my thinking is... I would lean toward the side that it was added, even though that violates sort of the cardinal ideas of textual criticism. "You just made it more difficult." Well, maybe somebody's trying to more explicitly link the phrase to Daniel 7. They felt some urge to do that. Who knows? I don't know. But to me, the whole thing just doesn't make much sense because if it's applied to Jesus (and I think it is there in context) then the son of man's not in heaven anyway.

Now I would say, no matter which one you pick, the idea of Jesus' preexistence is certainly not harmed. Because the preexistence of Jesus is taught in a number of passages, not just this one. So I don't think we need to worry about that theologically. That idea theologically does not derive from John 3:13.

So the short answer is, "Yeah. It's possible. But I think it's kind of clunky to have it there just because the son of man (Jesus) is on earth. He ain't in heaven anymore when this line is uttered."

TS: Gloria in Toledo, OH, has a question.

35:30

How does one pray in light of the Deuteronomy worldview? How does one pray for the unsaved in light of freewill?

Regarding "binding and releasing", Matthew 18 does not talk about prayer and yet I hear this frequently. Can you bind spirits for other people?

MH: I'm going to presume Gloria means "Deuteronomy 32 worldview" here. And so I don't... It's hard for me to see a problem in the first two of these. How would you pray in light of the Deuteronomy 32 worldview? Well, you would pray for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Because the Deuteronomy 32 worldview is about the diminishment of the kingdom of the principalities and powers, the Gentiles being looped back into the family of God. It's linked to the Great Commission because of Paul's reference to the fullness of the Gentiles being brought in, which is a precursor to the Second Coming and the Day of the Lord and the end. So how do you pray in light of that? You pray for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

How does one pray for someone who is not a believer in light of free will? Well, they do have a free will, so you would pray that believe. You pray that they would use that free will to accept the Gospel. So I don't really see what... I could be missing something in the question, but as it pops into my head here, I don't really see much of either problem here. I'm not sure what's troubling with respect to both of those.

Now the third one regarding the binding and the loosing... In the episode that we did on this topic, I spent a good bit of time going over why the language of binding and loosing refers to exorcism. When demons are exorcised they are, of course, in other people. They're not in the exorcist, so if the question is, when she asks, "Can you bind spirits for other people?" if the reference is to what the phrase actually means, "Can you exorcise demons from other people?" well the answer would be obviously yes. This is what happens in the New Testament and that, of course, isn't unique even in the modern world. So if that's what it means, that's pretty easy.

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But what I sense here is that this binding and loosing idea is often associated not with exorcism but with other things. Maybe the question is coming from the world of deliverance ministries, which is ironic. I did an interview yesterday where the two guys interviewing me had come out of a deliverance ministry, and this is exactly what they wanted to talk about—that (to loosely quote them) they came from a tradition that basically all of your problems (your sins, the things going bad in your life), there's a demon behind every one of them. So there's a demon of lust. There's demon of depression. There's a demon behind the coronavirus or not having a job. All these things that people can be afflicted by, the things that cause them concern in life, in their tradition there was a demonic reason for all of it. And I asked them, "Is there a demon of incompetence?" And I didn't mean that as a joke. I was serious about it. Because my follow-up question is, "Do we ever get to make a mistake and be accountable for it?" And I used that as a segue to getting into... My own feeling is that when we blame our sins and our failure to trust God on demons, we dismiss our own responsibility and we turn ourselves into victims. And that is *not* the New Testament portrayal of either sin or the struggle of the Christian life. You don't have passages that link specific demons to specific sins. You just don't. In the New Testament, you have quite the opposite. And I'm going to... Let's see here. The easy path would be to quote a little bit from my *Demons* book, but I'm going to just try to summarize this. For instance, there are New Testament warnings about giving opportunity to the devil (Ephesians 4:27), practicing sin over and over again, practicing sin is of the devil (1 John 3:8)... There *are* these kinds of verses. But there are lots of verses that link the struggles with sin and otherwise to ourselves. There's a whole New Testament theology about the flesh versus the spirit for believers. For Paul, for James (James 1)... Just look at James 1. I might as well just go and read it so that people can have this in their heads. We'll start in verse 12.

¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

The passage doesn't say, "Each person is tempted when he is lured away by the demon of fill-in-the-blank." You don't have this in New Testament theology. In Romans 7 you have Paul struggling with his own flesh. Peter writes about his own struggle, the struggle between fleshly lusts which war against the soul. And the reason is, in New Testament theology we are redeemed people who are trapped in unredeemed bodies. We are subject to the temptations and weaknesses of life, our flesh. That's where New Testament theology comes in. So I have a real problem with ministries that want to link behaviors and failures that we should just own up to and take responsibility for. They want to link that to a demon because that makes you a victim. It makes you not responsible. "You're just a helpless victim." No, you're not. You're not a helpless victim. There are plenty of instructions in the New Testament about not doing that thing that you say that you can't help doing because there's some demon making you do it or victimizing you. Is there a demon for failure to be a good disciple? I asked, "Is there a demon for incompetence? Is there a demon of incompetence? Is there a demon of 'I'm not a good disciple?'" These are serious questions that I don't see getting asked in certain Christian contexts that I think need to be asked.

And so I bring all this up because I don't know that this is behind the question. But I suspect that it is, because if it's just... If binding and loosing refers to exorcism, which I believe it does... We spent a whole episode on that. I think that's *abundantly* demonstrable. Then yeah, that is a problem that we can address to help other people. And so I don't think that this refers to specific demonic forces behind things that we're doing and shouldn't be doing or struggles we have. Now that is not to say that there's no input from the spiritual world. Because you do have these passages about giving place to the devil and being tempted by the devil to do this or that. I mean, there's a role to play there because we're conscious beings. The spirit world has conscious beings. There's some relationship there. But to sort of use that relationship to cancel out what are really dozens of passages in the New Testament about personal discipleship and personal responsibility to me is really theologically aberrant and, frankly, unwarranted and really unwise.

TS: Alright, Mike, another episode of good questions and good answers. We appreciate everybody that sent in their questions. Again, you can send me your

questions at TreyStricklin@gmail.com. And Mike, next week we're going back to another single topic.

MH: Yeah, we're going to talk about a specific word—a single word—that a lot of Christians know and throw around—the word *hesed*, typically translated as something like “lovingkindness” or “steadfast love” in the Old Testament. And I want to take a look at that because there's a loyalty element in here that I think could contribute to the whole concept of believing loyalty. So I want to take a look at that word.

TS: Alright, looking forward to it. Again, we appreciate everybody that sent in their questions. We appreciate you, Mike, answering our questions. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.