

## **Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**

**Episode 362**

**Revelation 3, Part 1**

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### **Episode Summary**

Revelation 3 contains John's letters to Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. John uses the Old Testament in a number of places in these letters. Some have been discussed in earlier episodes of this series on the use of the Old Testament in the book of Revelation. Our discussion in this episode, Part 1 of Revelation 3, focuses on phrases not yet discussed (e.g., "they will walk with me in white" ... "white garments" ... the "Book of Life" ... "hour of trial"). Part 2 will be a concentrated look at save for Rev 3:7's reference to the "key of David" in conjunction with Rev 1:18, the "keys of Death and Hades."

### **Transcript**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 362: Revelation 3, Part 1. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What's going on?

**MH:** Well, my Packers, of course, got eliminated. So that's what's going on, Trey. So I need to do biblical stuff to take my mind off that terrible loss.

**TS:** Yeah, that's a good distraction. And when this podcast comes out, Mike, it's actually Super Bowl weekend. So for those that are listening to this episode, I hope you're watching my Homey warm up. [MH laughs] And it's going to be a good Super Bowl, Mike.

**MH:** Right.

**TS:** The good thing is we did a lot of our sports talking before I hit "Record."

**MH:** Yep, it's out of my system. [TS laughs] I've adequately vented. [laughs]

**TS:** He literally cried (boo hoo) out loud. I had to calm him down so we could do this episode.

**MH:** [sigh] Yeah. Just terrible. Here I wanted to wear my Packers shirt while we did the podcast and be all ready for kick-off. But nope. Nope, nope, nope. Oh well.

**TS:** That's alright.

**MH:** I'm done. I'm done now. I'm not going to drag it out—inflict any more pain.

**TS:** Hopefully Rodgers will be a Packer next year.

**MH:** [flatly] Yeah, thanks for that, Trey. [laughs]

**TS:** Oh, my bad. I didn't mean to bring that up.

**MH:** [laughs] I don't even want to go there.

**TS:** Too soon? Ah. Okay.

**MH:** Too soon.

**TS:** Well, might as well just switch gears. We're going to have two parts of Revelation 3 here, huh?

**MH:** Yep. This'll be Part 1 today. I might as well just telegraph what we're going to do. So in this episode, we're going to hit everything in Revelation 3 that's Old Testament pertinent that we haven't hit before. You know, in these letters there's been overlap of content. This will be no different. But I'm going to skip the "keys of David" in Revelation 3:7. And that's what's going to be Part 2. Because we're going to take that verse and then loop back to Revelation 1:18 (the keys of Death and Hades) and devote a full episode to this "keys" stuff—this "keys" language. So hence we're going to have two parts. Because there's just a lot going on with respect to the "keys" thing that is really, I think, for this audience especially in light of *Unseen Realm*... I'll just tip it off a little bit. It's going to be directly connected to Christ's descent to the underworld—the 1 Peter 3 thing—that should be familiar for those who have read *Unseen Realm*, and the use of Enoch and the Watchers and all that kind of stuff. So that whole "keys" thing is going to be part of that. So that needs its own episode for sure.

So this time, we're just going to hit the other stuff that we have not touched on before in Revelation 3. So Part 1 is Old Testament in Revelation 3 everywhere else but that. So I'm going to start here by reading the first letter here, really the first five or six verses. You've got three churches here. This is the letter to the church in Sardis that the chapter starts out with. So let's just jump in here. I'm reading ESV.

**“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.**

**“I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. <sup>2</sup>Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. <sup>3</sup>Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. <sup>4</sup>Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup>The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. <sup>6</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’**

5:00

So that’s the first six verses, and really aimed at the church in Sardis. And what I want to focus on for our purposes... If you’re just a listener jumping in here to the series, we’re focused on the use of the Old Testament in the book of Revelation. So we’re not doing a verse-by-verse commentary on Revelation. We’re not talking about End Times systems or anything like that. If some of that becomes relevant because of the use of the Old Testament, we’ll hit that when we come to it. But our focus is on the impact of the Old Testament in this book.

So in verses 4 and 5, we get a couple of phrases here that have hooks back into the Old Testament. “They will walk with me in white,” and then this reference to “white garments.” And you also get a reference to white garments later in chapter 3 in verse 18. Now if you actually did a search in the book of Revelation, white shows up a lot. It’s a prominent color in the book of Revelation. In the New Testament there are 26 occurrences of this term λευκός (*leukos*)—white. Sixteen of them are in the book of Revelation, so well over half. Eight of the 16 refer to clothing. And the other 8 of those 16 refer to some aspect of the heavenly realm (in the book of Revelation). So the connection, most scholars think here, is Daniel 11:35 or Daniel 12:1, and maybe verse 10. I’m going to go to Daniel 12, just so you can catch the drift here. It says here... Well, let’s go back to 11:35 first. Might as well hit them all. So 11:35, we have this language here. It’s talking about the holy ones or the faithful ones in Daniel 11. And it says here:

**<sup>35</sup>and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.**

So you have this “time of the end,” “appointed time” connection with being “made white.” Okay? Then you go to chapter 12:

**“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.**

So here we have a reference to this “time.” And we’re going to talk about this “time of trouble” a little bit in this episode. It’s connected to, since there’s a reference there to this time that goes back to 11:35 where we get “being made white,” and here in 12:1 to get the same people found written in the book. It doesn’t say “book of Life,” but just “the book.” And so you can already tell this is what John is drawing on. He’s drawing on something in Daniel 11:35. He’s combining that with Daniel 12:1. Because back in Daniel they seem to be connected anyway. You go down to Daniel 12:10:

**<sup>10</sup> Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly.**

So there’s this connection with “being made white” at some “time of trouble,” that is, of course, in Daniel 12. The Old Testament context is very clearly the Day of the Lord—the end of days, that sort of thing. And so this is kind of easy for scholars to look at and figure out (initially, anyway) what Daniel is angling for—what he’s drawing on.

So white, at the least, denotes membership or belongingness for those who overcome at the end of days (in this “time of trouble”). And white, of course, would also be associated with the heavenly realm in the book of Revelation. Now that’s not really news. But we often fail to think about what that combination of things means, where it goes, where it leads. Because we fail to connect it with other terms that describe the appearance or transformation of believers elsewhere. And so Beale, for instance, in his book on *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, is going to do this. He’s going to say, “Well, this is kind of interesting. We’ve got white. We’ve got being made white. We’ve got a reference to white clothing. We’re drawing on Daniel, so it’s some sort of end of days—Day of the Lord—kind of thing.” But he doesn’t just let it drop there, which a lot of commentators do. He asks the question, “Well, okay, believers transformed into whiteness or white garments... What else happens to believers in the book of Revelation?” So here’s what he writes:

Christians taste the inaugurated fruits of some of the latter-day promises cited in the seven letters even before they die. The inaugurated aspect of some of the promises [MH: and he’s talking about an “already, but not yet” thing when he

uses the word “inaugurated”] can be discerned from an analysis of Rev. 2:7 [MH: which we’ve talked about in earlier episodes], as well as from the concluding promises in each of the letters...

And he says if you compare, for instance, Revelation 2:26-27, “to him that overcomes, I will put him over the nations; Revelation 3:21, “to him that overcomes, he will sit on my throne” (it’s this shared rulership thing); “I will give to him the morning star” [Revelation 2:28]. So these are transformative things. This is something that’s going to happen to believers. And since the kingdom is already present in some way, it’s an “already, but not yet” sort of thing. So what Beale’s going to say here is this being transformed, we need to think of it in terms of those (the “already, but not yet”) as well. So he says, if you go to Revelation 2:10, there we get a reference to “crowns” along with Revelation 3:11 and 4:4. We have white garments in Revelation 3:4–5, of course. We also get it in 18. But we also get the white mentioned in Revelation 4:4 and 6:11. He writes:

In fact, if the process of ‘conquering’ for the believer is completed at one’s death, then it is probable that the promises to the conquerors begin to some degree also at death.

He’s connecting these things, in other words. Now let’s take crowns, for instance. He’s lumping all this together—being made white, white garments, crowns, put over the nations, given the morning star, ruling with Jesus, sitting on his throne. Okay? All these things that show up in Revelation 2 and 3. Now I don’t know about you, but every time I heard in the past some sermon about crowns in heaven, it’s always about winning a prize. Like you win a contest or something. But if you’re catching the drift here, it’s really about rulership—shared rule as a member of God’s ruling family body. In other words, as a member of God’s council. The terminology of things like crowns and of this appearance... Basically you’re transformed to look like what you are. [laughs] To look like one of those guys already in the heavenly realm who are members of God’s host—members of God’s council. Angels are always being depicted in white and here we have believers in white. And we’ve got the language of the holy ones in the New Testament applied to *believers*. There are all sorts of pieces to this that we fail to put together, and where they all lead to is the transformation of the human believer to membership and a participatory role in God’s council. That’s where all of this language leads. But we tend to look at little pieces of it in sermons or whatnot and make it about either winning a contest or performance on earth or something like that. And it’s just so much bigger than that. It’s not that those things are nowhere in the picture. It’s that that’s not the picture—that’s not the *whole* picture. It’s not even the most important part of the picture.

Now Aune, in his Revelation commentary, picks up on the same strategy that, “Hey, let’s look at how else believers are transformed, and the language, and combine all these things to get a fuller picture.” He picks up on something that a

lot of other commentators don't, at least in the resources I have. He picks up on the line "they will walk with me in white." The walking. And he says this:

The language of Rev 3:4 is very possibly influenced by Gen 5:22 and 6:9... where it is said of both Enoch and Noah that they "walked with God".

15:00

Now I would say this. Though Aune spots this, in his commentary... At least he sees it. But he merely comments about it as some sort of language that is indicative of a relationship with God. And that's certainly true of both Enoch and Noah. For sure that's part of what's going on. But in Enoch's case, there's a little bit more going on because Enoch is translated. He is taken into God's presence—into the council throne room, so to speak. So there's a little bit more going on. Now in this regard, I'm going to recommend a book. I typically recommend books, and I try not to land on resources that are really expensive. This one actually exists in paperback, so it's not bad. It's part of the *Library of New Testament Studies* and the author is Laszlo Gallusz. And the book is entitled *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*. Again, it's part of the *Library of New Testament Studies* series. And I just want you to listen to what he does with this kind of language, especially the crown and the throne room. Because news flash to readers of Revelation, after we're done with chapter 3 (after this whole "being made white," the crowns, "sit with me on my throne," and "you inherit the nations,"), we go into chapter 4. And what's chapter 4? Revelation 4 and 5 is a Divine Council scene. Earlier in the history of this podcast, we had Dr. Bandy on, who did his dissertation on Revelation 4 and 5. We had him on for a specific episode about Revelation 4 and 5 being a Divine Council scene [Episode 207]. So we've been in this territory before. We are going to spend time on it, obviously, of our own when we get there in a couple weeks. But here's what Gallusz says about that scene in combination with some of this language here in Revelation 3 and really even back to Revelation 2. He says:

"... the white colour in this context evokes the notion of mercy... purity... equity in judgment... the glory of God... victory... vindication with holiness and the colour of heaven... Also, very often two or more of these ideas are combined in the interpretation [MH: in these visions that John has and then an angel will interpret—there's usually more than one thing going on—they usually get combined in the text]. It seems that all these concepts are inspired by the well-known white-black [MH: white vs. black] antithesis, prominent in the Bible, which conveys the interchangeable notions of vitality, life, light, holiness and joy as contrasted to the inertia, darkness, evil and sorrow on the other side...

The white garments they wear are consistently related in Revelation to people faithful to God. Similarly, golden crowns [MH: now catch this] are never ascribed to angelic beings in the book.

So a crown is an obvious reference to shared rulership. But angels don't get it. They don't get crowns. We do. [laughs] Okay? And you go back to Revelation 2. To make it sound a little bit like the book of Hebrews-ish, "It is not to the angels that he says, 'To him that overcomes I will put them over the nations.'" Or "to him that overcomes, they will sit with me on my throne." Jesus doesn't say that to the angels. They don't get crowns. Yes, they're already in white. And believers made white means, it's like the required form of dress now. You're part of this body (the Divine Council). But our status is actually higher than theirs. And again, that takes us back to Paul. "Don't you know someday that you're going to judge angels?" You know? These are all pieces, again, of this larger picture—this larger idea. So back to Gallusz, he says, again, "golden crowns are never ascribed to angelic beings in the book."

John's careful choice of the term to designate the crowns of the elders also points in this direction. Instead of *διάδημα* (*diadēma*) [MH: from which we get the English word "diadem"], a term with a limited reference to royal authority, *στέφανος* (*stephanos*) is used, which is capable of expressing more concepts simultaneously, including the idea of victory.

Let me just stop here. What he's saying is, it's interesting that John chooses *stephanos* over *diadēma*. Because if it was *diadēma*, it's only about rulership. But with *stephanos*, there's lots of other things looped in here that are associated with that term, one of which is victory. Which makes good sense because he's talking to "those who overcome," "those who remain faithful," so on and so forth. So *stephanos* includes royal authority, but it has some of these other aspects as well. And again, angels don't get any of these. Back to Gallusz:

It seems that the imagery characteristic of this eminent group (white garments, golden crowns and thrones) [MH: again, the elders are on the thrones] ties the elders to the overcomers of chs. 2–3, to whom these items are promised as a reward for conquering (2:10; 3:4–5, 11, 21)...

20:00

Let me just stop here again. That's going to tip his hand that he looks at the elders as being symbolic of human believers who are assisting in the rulership of God. Back to *Unseen Realm*, where do we get this "Yahweh and his elders" language? It's from Isaiah. This language shows up in Isaiah, that at the end of days, "Yahweh will be approved among his elders," whatever the language is there. In other words, this council already exists and now believers are moved into it. They're grafted into it by virtue of this language. Gallusz says:

... the book's dominant symbol of authority is the throne. However, the motif is not the sole indicator of the concept... [The] author of Revelation employs additional symbolism to connote rule, using images such as sword, crown, robes, keys, rod, horns and heads.

And some of those we'll get to in later chapters. But basically what he's arguing for is, again, if you look at not just the things here in chapter 3 (one or two words)... If you look at the description of the believers here using those terms and you look at descriptions of believers elsewhere in the book... We haven't even gotten into the Divine Council scene in Revelation 4 and 5. We're still in the letters. If you even look that far, you're going to see a variety of ways to refer to believers as co-rulers—inheritors of the status of membership in the Divine Council. But again, we typically... At least my experience has been, you're in church and it's some message about crowns in heaven. It's very isolated. It lacks all of this backdrop—all of this background. It's a very tunnel-vision look at a term, when there's so much else going on. It's actually a good illustration of what we try to do on the podcast, what I'm trying to do in *Unseen Realm*, that a lot of this is already familiar to you (this terminology, these ideas), but unless you have the structure—unless you have the matrix—built out for you, you can't really see the role that this term, this idea, this concept, this phrase plays (what it really means in its fuller extent) if you don't have the backdrop with you—if you don't have the matrix. "If you don't have the mosaic" is the metaphor I used in *Unseen Realm*. And this is a good illustration of it.

Let's move on to something else in verse 5: "I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels." Now I'm not going to spend too much time here, because we've already done an episode on the book of life and other heavenly books. That's the podcast Episode 89. But I do want to say a few things, and I'll loop some of that content in here to not leave it bare.

"Book of life" is a phrase that occurs six times in Revelation. So you get it here in verse 5 (Revelation 3:5). You get it in Revelation 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; and then 21:27. It has very ancient antecedents. And we go into this in a lot of detail in episode 89. But we go all the way back to Mesopotamia with something called "the tablets." Recall Mesopotamians wrote on tablets. They didn't write in books. The Tablets of Destiny... And the fundamental ideas behind the Tablets of Destiny were that you had the gods (in other words the Mesopotamian version of the Divine Council), they make decrees, they decree destiny. They determine what's going to happen. They interact with people on that level. Some of the tablets are really focused on the divine king (specifically the Assyrian version). And there's one that says, "You are king because the gods want you to be king," that sort of thing. That's a little different than saying that the gods (the council) predestines every event in your life. When it comes to the king, it's like their choice of putting you in authority. The idea is that the gods choose the king and then they prop up the king. And the king better fulfill his destiny, because that's what the gods want and the gods are keeping track of what the king does.

Well, in some texts, that gets expanded out to just normal people, that in Mesopotamia, the gods are sort of watching. They decree destiny and they keep an eye on things. When you move into the Old Testament and the Second



25:00

Temple literature, it is God who decides the fates of nations, the fates of kings. So it's a little bit like the Mesopotamian stuff but the concept is a lot wider. And we talk about this specifically in Episode 89, where it could be recording things that happened to individuals, both good and bad. There is a sense of keeping track of what people are doing and what people are doing to other people. There's this book of life that really applies to those whose believing loyalty is with the God of Israel as opposed to something else. So there's judgments, there's record-keeping. These are the motifs. We've talked about this actually on the podcast a number of times.

Aune, in his commentary again, picks up on some of this. I don't want to repeat Episode 89 here. There's a lot to it. But there are commentators who are aware that this is a very old idea. And it is connected to God's bureaucracy—God's council, his assembly, this whole record-keeping. If you've read my *Angels* book, the whole idea of the guardian angel (the angel who keeps watch) is part of this complex of ideas. But Aune writes this in his commentary about this language at this particular point. He says:

The motif of a Book of Life in which the names of the saved are written and the motif of the erasure of a person's name from such a Book are extremely widespread in the OT and early Judaism, sometimes used together and sometimes separately. The possibility of having one's name erased from the Book of Life suggests that fidelity to God rather than any type of predestinarian system is the reason for having one's name inscribed in the Book of Life in the first place (see Rev 17:8).

I'm going to read that over again. Because we tend to read these things as though, "Well, God wrote all those names in there beforehand, and once they're written, God can't unwrite them. He can't erase them." In other words, it's this confusion with the concept of election that divorces election from believing loyalty. And I've commented before that I think election in the Old Testament is fundamentally misunderstood. Israel was elect. No kidding. Duh. That's very obvious. It's just too bad that a lot, maybe even most, Israelites you're not going to see in heaven. Why? Because there's this thing called the exile—a grand apostasy of the elect. And then you have the non-elect (those who aren't Israelites) being grafted in. Well, how does that happen? If everything's written in these books beforehand, how can that change? Again, what Aune is saying is it's wrong-headed to think of this in predestinarian modes because things do change. Okay? [laughs] The non-elect become elect. The elect go off and worship other gods. And they're out. Okay? *Things change*. We have fundamentally misunderstood this idea. So Aune says, "This is what we got." It seems... I'm going to read it again:

The possibility of having one's name erased from the Book of Life [MH: that's a change] suggests that fidelity to God [MH: let's just say "believing loyalty"] rather

than any type of predestinarian system is the reason for having one's name inscribed in the Book of Life in the first place...

The traditional character of this pronouncement in Rev 3:5 is evident in the close parallel to vv 5a and 5b in *Odes Sol.* 9:11 [MH: that's a pseudepigraphical book], where the two motifs of *conquering* and of *having one's name inscribed in a heavenly book* are combined in a positive formulation [MH: and he quotes] (tr. Charlesworth, *OTP*): "Put on the crown in the true covenant of the Lord, And all those who have conquered will be inscribed in His book."

So there you have this believing loyalty idea—loyalty to Yahweh. And in Revelation's case, it's loyalty to the gospel. You don't trade the gospel for anything else. You keep believing. I know you've heard me say that a hundred times now, especially if you recently listened to the series in Hebrews, but that's the point. You keep believing. That's the only issue. That's the book of life issue right there, that you have aligned yourself with the gospel. You believe in the gospel for everlasting life and you don't believe anything else. You don't throw your loyalty anywhere else, to any other god or any other promises about how this or that religion or god can bring you salvation. You turn your back on all of them and you align yourself right here, to the cross event and the resurrection. Okay? This is what you do. Back to Aune:

30:00

In Judaism and early Christianity, the primary setting of the Book of Life motif was the judgment scene in which God is seated upon his throne surrounded by heavenly courtiers (Dan 7:9–10; Rev 20:12–15; *1 Enoch* 47:3; 90:20). The origin of this metaphor is certainly that of the ancient Near Eastern royal court, where records were made available to the king for dispensing justice (Ezra 4:15; Esth 6:1), though the idea itself goes back to Sumerian and Akkadian literature.

And back to the Tablets of Destiny. Aune adds elsewhere:

The motif of having one's name *erased* from, or *blotted out* of, the Book of Life is a metaphor for judgment (Exod 32:32–33; Ps 69:27–28; *1 Enoch* 108:3; *Jub.* 30:22), based on the notion of expulsion or disenfranchisement from the record of citizenship. Originally, however, to be *blotted out* of the Book of Life meant "to die" (Exod 32:32–33; Ps 69:27–28; Isa 4:3).

But it's bigger than that. So the point is that this whole idea... Election (this sort of predestinarian model that we often have in our heads) is really not how we should be reading this. Election didn't guarantee eternal life for Israelites. Again, we have this thing called the exile. It's a really big deal in biblical history. It's fundamentally, foundationally important in biblical theology. The exile. The exile happened because there was a grand apostasy. The elect go after other gods. There are few things more obvious in the Bible than that, if you read your Old

Testament. And so he's saying, "Look, we need to be thinking about this 'you're in the book of life but you can be erased.' The basis of that cannot be predestination, because if it was predestinated, we wouldn't even be talking about changes here. The basis for the language has to be believing loyalty." It's very consistent. That brings us to Revelation 3:7-8. We're going to skip the "keys" stuff for Part 2. So I'm going to go right to verse 9, which says this:

**<sup>9</sup> Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.**

Now again, we've commented on this before in prior episodes about the synagogue of Satan and what that might be and so on and so forth. I want to add a little bit, but we're not going to go back and rehearse what that is or where it is and all this sort of stuff. There's something in here that we need to add to it, and it's this last part, "They will learn that I have loved you."

Okay, they (these Jews who are opposing believers), they're opposing the messiahship of Jesus, but that's not all they're opposing. Now think about it. This is a letter to one of the churches in Asia (Asia Minor). Okay? There's a lot of Gentile turf here. The synagogue of Satan, if that's Pergamon, that's a Gentile city. So what John is saying here (and of course he's the mouthpiece for the Lord in these letters) is that "they (the Jews) will learn that I have loved *you*." Well, who's "*you*"? Well, it's Jews *and* (especially) including Gentiles in the family. "Anyone (Jew or Gentile) whose believing loyalty is aligned to me, that's who's going to have eternal life. They (the Jews) are going to learn that I have loved you." And "*you*" includes Gentiles substantially, especially in these letters.

Now again, I'm bringing that up for a specific reason. Let me just go to Beale and Carson's commentary. And they take us back to the Old Testament for some of this stuff. And again, it's going to sound a little bit familiar, but I want to make a very specific point here. Beale and Carson, in their *Old Testament in the New Testament* commentary write:

The clause "I will make them in order that (or 'so that') they will come and bow down before your feet" [MH: that's in Revelation 3:9] is a collective allusion to Isa. 45:14; 49:23; 60:14... [and] Ps. 86:9.

Now I'm going to look up a few of these. So Isaiah 45:14:

**<sup>14</sup> Thus says the LORD:  
"The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush,  
and the Sabeans, men of stature,  
shall come over to you and be yours;**

**they shall follow you;  
they shall come over in chains and bow down to you.  
They will plead with you, saying:  
‘Surely God is in you, and there is no other,  
no god besides him.’”**

So it’s a reference to Gentile people—people from the nations—admitting that Yahweh is the true God. So Isaiah 49:23:

**<sup>23</sup> Kings shall be your foster fathers,  
and their queens your nursing mothers.  
With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you  
[MH: it’s a reference to Zion and to Israel],  
and lick the dust of your feet.  
Then you will know that I am the LORD;  
those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.”**

35:00 So we’ve got a series of verses here. I’m not going to look them all up. But the series of verses is about Gentile conversion or Gentile acknowledgement of who the true God is. So Beale and Carson write this:

These OT texts predict that the unbelieving Gentiles would come and bow down at Israel’s feet and to Israel’s God in the last days. This prophecy has been fulfilled in an apparent ironic fashion in the Gentile church, which has become true Israel by virtue of its faith in Christ. In contrast [MH: here’s the irony], the ethnic Israelites in Philadelphia fulfill the role of the Gentiles.

They’re the opposition. Beale and Carson continue:

Likewise, the prophecy that God would demonstrate his love for persecuted Israel before the nations seems to be fulfilled in an ironic manner: “and [they will] know that I have loved you” in 3:9b is applied to the Gentile-dominated church instead of ethnic Israel, as apparently in [MH: a grocery list of passages] Isa. 43:4 (and LXX of Isa. 41:8; 44:2; 60:10; 63:9; cf. 48:14; *Jub.* 1:25).

Let’s go to Isaiah 43:4. Ah, let’s go back up. Verse 1 is:

**But now thus says the LORD,  
he who created you, O Jacob,  
he who formed you, O Israel:**

So he's talking to Israel. Here's verse 4:

**<sup>4</sup> Because you are precious in my eyes,  
and honored, and I love you,  
I give men in return for you,  
peoples in exchange for your life.**

God disinherits the nations, but Israel is his own family.

**<sup>5</sup> Fear not, for I am with you;  
I will bring your offspring from the east,  
and from the west I will gather you.  
<sup>6</sup> I will say to the north, Give up,  
and to the south, Do not withhold;**

And again, you get into this “regathering language,” so on and so forth, from the nations. So it's this reversal theme. You know, we've seen this a lot, the Deuteronomy 32 worldview, all this sort of stuff. And what Beale and Carson are trying to say here is that, you know, this language in Revelation 3:9 that pits the Jews (ironically enough) as the opposer to the followers of Yahweh... I mean, Yahweh is the Jewish God. How does this work? Well, it works this way because a lot of the Jews either... In the Old Testament time they abandoned the worship of Yahweh and worshiped other gods. In the New Testament time they have rejected Yahweh's messiah, who is Yahweh incarnate. They have rejected Jesus. And so now they are set in the opposition role. And the people of God become instead Gentiles—you know, it's a lot of Gentiles. If this sounds like Romans 11, then you kind of know what I'm angling for here. We've talked about this before. In earlier episodes, we've spent a good bit of time on the whole notion about Israel being rejected and the Gentiles grafted in—Romans 11, so on and so forth. This is essentially... Revelation 3:9 is following that same trajectory. It's about this reversal—this ironic situation, where the Old Testament people of God are now the opposers. They're opposing Yahweh's plan. They're opposing their own God's plan because it included Gentiles. And they're persecuting believers. They're persecuting these believers. And they're just on the wrong side. They're on the wrong side.

Now in the previous episode or two here in Revelation, I've made that comment that it's incoherent to take this language as some sort of generally anti-Semitic posture. And it *is* incoherent. Now I realize a Jew today who rejects Jesus could read it that way. “Oh, John's just targeting Jews. He doesn't like Jews. The New Testament's an anti-Semitic book.” But to do that, you'd have to forget or ignore a couple of things. First, you'd have to ignore that the writer is a Jew. Second, you'd have to ignore the fact that the comments are aimed at a subset of Jews:

those who are persecuting Christians. Not every Jewish person's doing that. The immediate context is persecution. Third (we really haven't mentioned this before), you'd also have to ignore how in New Testament theology, the Jewish opposition (the Jewish antipathy) toward the people of God (toward the followers of Jesus, who is the Jewish messiah) is something that God did in part to be a catalyst toward the salvation of Israel. In other words, ultimately, it's something God's going to use to turn Israel back to himself. And that's Romans 11. So Romans 11 is not talking about salvation based on original ethnicity. Like, "Oh, if you're ethnically a Jew, God set you aside. But don't worry. You're still going to be in because you're an ethnic Jew." That has nothing to do with it. It ultimately has to do with believing loyalty. And it's a very consistent theology.

40:00

I want you to listen to Romans 11 again in light of this. I'm going to read verses 17-23. And verse 23 is going to have something in it that really clarifies what's going on in Romans 11. And just generally it's going to fit in with all this conversation we've had in many episodes about believing loyalty. So Romans 11:17, Paul says:

**<sup>17</sup> But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others...**

So the original (Jewish) plant has some branches broken off. Jews will reject the messiah. And now you Gentiles get grafted in.

**[You] a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not be arrogant toward the branches.**

Okay? You newcomers, you Gentiles, don't be arrogant at the ones who were broken off (the Jews).

**If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. <sup>19</sup> Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> That is true. They were broken off *because of their unbelief*, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. <sup>21</sup> For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.**

In other words, "they didn't get in by ethnicity. You ain't getting in by ethnicity either. You must believe." Verse 22:

**<sup>22</sup> Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue [MH: you *continue*] in his kindness.**

Kindness, grace, *hesed*. We did a whole episode on lovingkindness, loving loyalty, allegiant loyalty. It works both directions: God to us, us to God.

**Otherwise you too will be cut off.**

As we have fundamentally misunderstood Old Testament election, yes, I believe we have fundamentally carried that misunderstanding into the New Testament era as well. Again, I just think election is fundamentally misunderstood across the board. We think that if... Again, I'm just doing traditions at random here. "I got baptized in the church. I got sprinkled. I got this. I got that. I was made a member of the covenant community. This is a sign and a seal of the covenant." Well, yeah, it is, but hey, you don't have eternal life because of signs and seals. You have eternal life... Those are just markers. Those are things that put you into a community where you can hear the gospel, but guess what? News flash, pro tip: you have to believe it and you've got to keep believing it. You can't just pray a prayer or go through a confirmation and say, "Well, boy, I'm past that benchmark. Now I can do whatever I want. I can believe whatever I want. I can believe in no God at all. I'm in! I'm good! I can just think and believe and do what I want!" Wrong. [laughs] Okay? It's just wrong. And it's not that you're meriting salvation. This is not works salvation. It is a continued faith. It is a continued belief. It is a continued believing loyalty in the one thing that *will* give you everlasting life, and it ain't you. It ain't your works. It's the work of Christ on the cross. You have to remain loyal to that.

Now in the last verse... I didn't get to verse 23 yet. Let me go back to verse 22:

**<sup>22</sup> Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.**

And here's verse 23:

**<sup>23</sup> And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.**

So the "elect become non-elect" can become elect again. I'm hoping you see how the way Christianity has traditionally thought about election just really doesn't work with this kind of language. Okay? If you're, like, a high Calvinistic system, I don't know what you're doing with *this*. The elect become non-elect, and then they become elect again if they don't continue in their unbelief. Huh? It makes really *good* sense if the election *doesn't* mean salvation—if it means something else, if it means access to the truth. You know, Israel alone had access to the truth. They had a relationship with the true God. God comes to

them (he comes to Abraham). He creates them out of Abraham and Sarah. He starts over after he disinherits humanity at Babel. So they're new. And these are all acts of God. God continues coming to them, making covenants, making promises, bailing them out from this and that crisis and whatnot, brings them to the land, gives them the temple—all this kind of stuff. And then they just go off and worship other gods anyway. Election was access to the truth. That's what it is. Okay? It is a beginning point. It is an introduction. It is a revelation toward what you must believe to have eternal life. And by "believe" it doesn't mean that you pray a prayer—you pray an incantation. Okay? Biblical theology is not about shamanistic practice. "I went through a ritual and now I have eternal life." No. The only thing that matters is "do you believe the gospel—right now?"

This is why the book of Hebrews—this is why the book of Revelation... That's where we're at: the book of Revelation. It's this "keep believing, continue, to him that overcomes, to him that endures to the end." It doesn't mean, like, doing spiritual pushups—works. Okay? It's not earned. It's not merited. It's that, "Are you refusing to switch loyalties? Don't switch loyalties. Believe the gospel and keep believing it. You believe the gospel, you are going to be secure. Forever. You're going to have everlasting life. But we have confused this kind of... Again, what is said about election just doesn't jive with this kind of language in Romans 11 and it doesn't jive with going back to Revelation. Because in Revelation 3:9 (where we're at in this little segment), he dips back into the Old Testament to remind them, "Look, you've got your opponents (these Jewish people). They hate us because we follow Jesus. They reject the messiah. But they're going to learn. They're going to learn because their Old Testament actually told them this, that the outsiders are going to become insiders." Again, there are all these passages where the Gentiles acknowledge who the true God is and come to worship him.

That's what's happening here, in real time, when John's writing these letters. Gentiles are coming to the faith. We have these churches in Asia Minor. And they *are* the people of God. They are a new Israel, reborn. But they're Gentiles. And John, just like Paul, would say, "You should've expected this. The Jews should've expected this and not opposed it." But here we are. They're opposing it. And they're going to learn what they should've learned already, because John's drawing intellectually from these different passages. So I just wanted to rabbit trail on that a little bit. Revelation 3:10, let's just go there.

**<sup>10</sup> Because you have kept my word about patient endurance [MH: there we go again: patient endurance—keep believing], I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.**

Now that is *not* a reference to... That's not saying, "Hey, if you keep believing, nothing bad is ever going to happen to you." It's a reference to the ultimate Day of the Lord—to the ultimate judgment. You're not going to be part of that. [laughs] Okay? You're not going to be part of that. Here in the family of God, you're not



going to be part of that. That's his point. It's probably an allusion again to Daniel 12:1. And I'm not going to spend too much time on that. We've hit Daniel 12:1 a little bit before, but just to read that to you:

**“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. [MH: Here's the point.] And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.**

Again, “if you're in the book of life (Daniel doesn't use that term, but John does), you're not going to be at this ultimate judgment. You're not going to suffer that.” That's his point in Revelation 3:10. Revelation 3:12, there's a couple of things to hit here. It says this:

**<sup>12</sup>The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.**

50:00

Now we talked about Revelation 3:12 last week in relation to hidden manna, the white stone, the name inscribed on the stone. That was the last episode. But here we have another one of these, that there's just a few other things to say here. Again, we're just supplementing a little bit. Last time we had to dip into Revelation 3, and we're here in Revelation 3 so we can add a few things.

Now we talked in relation to the manna, the stone, the name inscribed. We talked about how that's really Name theology. It was Old Testament Name theology applied to the believer. And I'm going to add a little bit to that here from Beale's book on the Old Testament in Revelation. This is not his Revelation commentary. This is a different book. He writes here:

The concluding mention in Rev. 2:17 of the 'new name having been written' on a stone is an example of a brief allusion conveying substantial prophetic overtones from the Old Testament. Rev. 3:12 reveals that the name in 2:17 is a pregnant reference to 'the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My [Christ's] new name', which is written on the believer.

That much we hit last time. If you remember back in Revelation 2 when we hit these phrases about the hidden manna, the white stone with a name on it, Beale and others took us to Revelation 3:12 and said, “Ah, Revelation 3:12 essentially answers the question.” And he says right here again, “Revelation 3:12 reveals

that this name inscribed back in chapter 2 is ‘the name of My God, the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, and of course Christ’s new name.’ The name there (back in chapter 2) was not a reference to the believer’s name being inscribed. It was rather these other things.” So to continue here with what Beale says:

Separate meanings are not to be assigned to each of these names...

If you notice in Revelation 3 there, there’s a list: “name of my God, name of the city of my God, the name of the city of my God (which comes out of heaven from my God), and my (Christ’s) new name.” So he’s saying that those aren’t three different things. They don’t have separate meanings. But, he writes:

... but they all refer to the intimate, eschatological presence of God and Christ with his people, as expressed most clearly [MH: later] by 22:3–4: ‘the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it [MH: the new Jerusalem], and His bondservants shall serve Him; and *they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads’*...

So he’s saying that all of these things really refer to the same thing. Now all of that leads Beale to a conclusion. He writes this:

This conclusion is also pointed to by observing that the ‘new name’ of 2:17 is an allusion to the prophecy of Isa. 62:2 and 65:15 about Israel’s new standing in the future. The saints of Israel are referred to figuratively (by metonymy) as Jerusalem which ‘will be called by a new name’ [MH: again, they’re not different, personal names; it’s the name of God]. There, the ‘new name’ designates Israel’s future kingly status (62:3) [MH: it’s a direct allusion there], restoration to Yahweh’s covenantal presence (62:4a; cf. the same significance for ‘name’ in 56:4–8; 65:15–19)... The promised blessings of this prophecy will be fulfilled among those in the church, the latter-day Israel, who do not compromise. Isaiah’s prophecy of Israel’s restoration to God’s latter-day presence lies as the substratum also for all the other references in the book to the believers’ ‘name’ (3:12; 14:1; 22:4) and God’s or Christ’s ‘name’ (3:12 and 22:4, as well as 19:12–13, 16).

Now essentially, what Beale’s arguing for is that all this Name stuff (the inscribed name)... You get a host of “names.” There are three or four of these. He’s saying, “Look, they all point to the same thing. This naming points to God being present, God’s ownership over the believer. But corporately, those believers that get the new name (get the hidden manna, the white stone, the white garments, the stuff we’ve been talking about today), collectively, that is the new Israel. And if you think of the church as this new form of Israel, when you go back to these passages in Isaiah (Isaiah 62, Isaiah 65, he loops in Isaiah 56 here), all of these things that you see in the book of Revelation about getting a new name and

having the presence of God with that new name... In the Old Testament, there are references to the end-of-days newly redeemed brought back Israel. In Revelation, they're said of these churches, which are predominantly Gentile.

So what Beale's arguing for is that we need to remember, when John dips into the Old Testament here for this language, if you go back to the Old Testament, it's only about this ethnic entity Israel, this boots-on-the-ground geographic entity Israel. But when John is writing, John knows that that ultimate outcome of those things is not just a single nation the size of New Jersey. (That's my little throw-in here. John's not thinking about New Jersey. There wasn't a New Jersey.) But John's not thinking about isolated geography. John is thinking about these churches that are scattered in Asia Minor that are predominantly Gentile. And he says, "Look, I can say this about you (these churches). I can say this about you Gentiles, because you are a new Israel. You are the outcome of these things. And all Israel really is is the family of God—the people of God. And it's not tied to any ethnicity or anything like this. It's tied completely to where your loyalty is—who's your God, and so on and so forth."

So there's actually a lot of consistency across the testaments. But you have this strong Gentile element in the New Testament, but John's argument as he's dipping back into these Old Testament references... And especially back in verse 9, where we took our little rabbit trail from Revelation 3:9 into Romans 11 about "the Gentiles bowing down before your feet" and so on and so forth. John's saying, "Look, you Jews that are really upset by this, you should've known." Because he's drawing on these passages that talk about Gentiles coming into the family of God, acknowledging who the true God is, bowing down to Yahweh. "All this stuff's in your Bible. All this stuff is in your Hebrew Bible, you Jews that are opposing the believers here in these churches. You should've known. And not only should you have known, but you should've submitted to it. You should've embraced it and accepted it. It should be your theology but it isn't. And that puts you in opposition to your own God." [laughs] You know? And again, that's where the Romans 11 thing really comes in here, that "you can be set aside. And you have been set aside. But you can also be grafted back in."

So he's not... This isn't generally anti-Semitic stuff. It's very poignant, it's very theological, and it's very consistent with reading their Old Testament and just submitting to it. Just saying, "Okay, this is how it played out." But that's what their opponents are not doing. They refused to do it. And so you get a lot of this Old Testament imagery that in its original context of course applied only to ethnic Israel. But here, as John repurposes it, it's just a wider picture. Now we have the Gentile reality that these Old Testament passages talked about. "So I feel quite free," John would say. "I feel *quite* free to take these passages and use them to talk about Gentiles in the church. That is completely appropriate. That's how that language in the Old Testament played out. We're here, in real time. This is how it played out. And if you don't like that, then you're in the really awkward position of being a Jew opposing your own God, which isn't a good place to be."

So again, I think the takeaway for us with all this... Most of us are Gentiles listening to this anyway and we're used to this kind of thinking. I think that's a good reminder. I think it's also a good reminder if we take this whole Jew/Gentile thing back to Romans 11, and we can see how the way we're used to thinking about election just doesn't work. Because the ones who are grafted in can be taken out. The ones who were taken out can be put back in. I don't know how that squares with a predestinarian model. I really don't. "Well, God predestinated where it ends." Okay, well that's looking at the end. In the beginning, if something is *predestinated* (elect or non-elect), predestination language typically doesn't allow for changes in status. And that's what you have here. You have changes. And you actually have more than one change in some texts. It can go back and forth. So I think we need a little bit of an adjustment there. And we need to get our theology more in line with the text.

1:00:00

So that's one takeaway, and the other one is, I think especially for this audience, when... What John's doing in Revelation 3 and also what he did in Revelation 2 (when he actually gets into the actual letters here)—these two chapters (Revelation 2 and 3)—in some sense it prepares us for chapters 4 and 5 (the Divine Council scene). Because all this language that he uses of the believers transformed (the white garments, the white this, white that, all these transformations, the shared rulership, the fact that we have crowns and angels don't, this sort of thing), it sets us up for this notion. It's just part of this bigger picture, that believers become part of this body—part of the Divine Council—on our glorification. And this is what Revelation is angling for. Again, we're not even at the scene yet. We're not even at the Divine Council scene, but John is prepping that. So even in these letters to churches, he's seeding that information into these letters. And ultimately, it's supposed to be an encouragement to believers. "This is your destiny. This is really difficult now, but this is ultimately your destiny." And I think for us, it's a great reminder. It's a good takeaway, that we... Ultimately where we're headed is shared membership, joint rule with Jesus (to loop in Hebrews, "our Brother"), in the council (Hebrews 2), and we are participants in that council—in that assembly—with him at the end of days.

**TS:** Alright, Mike. Can you give us a quick preview of what we can expect in Part 2?

**MH:** Yeah, Part 2, like I said at the beginning here, these references to the keys of Death and Hades, and the keys of David here in Revelation 3. This is actually going to connect to Christ's descent into the underworld. There's that infamous passage in 1 Peter 3 that we talk about in *Unseen Realm* a lot. And you know, there's lots of sessions on YouTube of me talking about that passage. It's going to loop into that, preaching to the spirits in prison. You have to ask yourself, "keys of Death and Hades," if those are locked [laughs] (let's just use the metaphor) and somehow after the resurrection they are unlocked and Jesus has the keys to them, logically the only place, the only time, the only opportunity he would've had

to unlock those things is when (as the Apostles' Creed says) he descended into hell. It's really a reference to the underworld. So when you do that, you're there at the abyss, you're there with the scene with the Watchers. There's going to be some overlap between 1 Peter 3 and this language. And it's ultimately going to have to do not only with just overcoming death and so on and so forth like that, but the reference to David is also going to be about kingship. So I think that's enough to say at this point to say this, that you have sort of a throwaway reference to keys that just sounds kind of weird, that doesn't seem like it really has any meaning or any importance at all. But it actually links back to a number of things that this audience really likes to talk about and really likes to think about in terms of the supernatural worldview. So it's one of those "if it's weird, it must be important." And this'll be another one you can file in that box.

**TS:** Mm. My favorite episodes. Really looking forward to that, Mike. I like that. Alright.

**MH:** The weird stuff?

**TS:** I like the weird stuff, just like our audience. You kidding me? [MH laughs] Love it.

**MH:** There's two ways we could take that, Trey. [laughs]

**TS:** Hey. [laughs] Alright, Mike, that's true. Well, with that, we'll be looking forward to Part 2 next week. And I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.