

## **Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**

### **Episode 398**

### **Beginner Guides to New Testament Studies**

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**Guest: Dr. Nijay Gupta (NG)**

### **Episode Summary**

For those who love to study Scripture, it is easy to discern rather quickly that to really move into in-depth Bible study takes serious tools and some mentoring. How does one go about choosing the best tools for Bible study? What are the most significant debates among scholars who spend their whole lives studying Scripture? Why do those debates exist? What are the interpretive sides and rationales adopted by scholars? In this episode of the podcast, we talk with Dr. Nijay Gupta to gain some understanding on the New Testament side of biblical studies. Specifically, Dr. Gupta has produced important resources for evaluating New Testament commentaries and for getting up to speed on the controversies that rage in the study of the New Testament.

### **Transcript**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 398: Beginner Guides to New Testament Study with Nijay Gupta. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

**MH:** Pretty good. I've had a few really good days in a row. I took a little break from chemo to get another CAT scan and meet with doctors and so on and so forth. So we don't have results of that yet. But I think probably by the time that this episode surfaces, we might. But for sure, by the next episode, I'm quite confident I will have been able to post an update for everybody listening, to keep everybody up to date with the progress on my cancer and its treatment. But I've had a good week. So I can't complain.

**TS:** That's good. So everybody, we need to step up the prayers. So keep doing that. Don't let up. It makes a difference. It works. Absolutely.

**MH:** Yep. It's very encouraging.

**TS:** Yeah, that's great. Alright, Mike. Well, I wanted to let everybody know that we have a discount code for the two books that you're going to be discussing today. And you can get that at [NakedBiblePodcast.com](http://NakedBiblePodcast.com). It runs for the next 30

days. So be sure you go to the website to get that discount. And Mike, what are we going to be discussing today?

**MH:** We're going to be chatting with Nijay Gupta about two of his books. The first one is related to commentaries. I get questions about commentaries all the time. "What's a good commentary on this particular book?" Nijay has authored a book entitled *The New Testament Commentary Guide: A Brief Handbook for Students and Pastors*. So he goes through the different types of commentaries. What is a good commentary? Well, it depends on different factors. It's a book where he reviews essentially massive amounts of commentaries—the ones that are out there—and makes recommendations and describes what makes them different. So that's going to be really useful for this audience. And then his second book is *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Studies: Understanding Key Debates*. So if we were at an academic conference like ETS or SBL and it was your first time there, or you're a beginning seminary student, or you're just into biblical studies but you sort of don't know the jargon (you don't know the lay of the land, you don't know who fights about what [laughs] in New Testament scholarship) this is the perfect book for that. He'll help you eavesdrop on these sorts of conversations. So I think this is a really significant book, especially for this audience because it'll get you up to speed on what New Testament scholars argue about. What are the debates? And why do the debates exist? And who takes what side? And how do the respective sides argue their points for all sorts of things? Basically, in every book of the New Testament there's something going on here. There's a minefield somewhere. And so this is the perfect book to really help beginning students, and even pastors and those of us with a little more experience. Maybe we haven't taken a deep dive into New Testament area studies. This is the kind of resource that you want to have at your disposal. So we're looking forward to the conversation with Nijay because he has produced some really useful material.

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**MH:** Well, we're thrilled to have Dr. Nijay Gupta with us on the podcast. And I met Nijay a few years ago (I guess it's more than a few now) at a regional AAR/SBL meeting and have sort of followed his career at a distance, since he's New Testament. He's "working in the appendixes," we Old Testament people like to say), [laughter] and my field, of course, was a bit different. But Nijay has turned into a well-known, prolific scholar. And we're just thrilled to have him on the podcast. I'm going to ask him to introduce himself: where he's been to school, what he teaches, and so on and so forth. So Nijay, thanks for doing this for us. And please tell the audience who you are.

**NG:** Thanks, Michael. It's great to be with you. And I've known about your podcast for a long time, so it's really an honor to be invited. I teach at Northern

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Seminary, which is in Chicagoland, but I actually live in Portland, OR. My wife's a pastor here in the Portland metro area. I've driven by Bellingham many times on my way up to Canada and other things. But I haven't stopped in that area yet. So I teach New Testament. Other than that, I enjoy being editor of the Bulletin for Biblical Research. That keeps me pretty busy in my spare time. I have three kids, who are in their middle school/high school years. And so they're in soccer and so I spend a lot of time driving them around. And I'm the home chef. So I love cooking.

**MH:** Oh, yeah.

**NG:** I do a lot of Asian food/Indian food, things like that. Especially during the pandemic, you kind of cozy up with a bowl of curry.

**MH:** There you go.

**NG:** And I kick back and relax. So yeah, as you know, I love blogging. I love writing. I love reading. I love buying books. So I moved home a while back to a home office. And now I'm surrounded by my books at home. So that puts me in my happy place. [MH laughs]

**MH:** Yeah, we know all about that. Where'd you do your PhD?

**NG:** I studied at the University of Durham in the UK. It was actually kind of the heyday, I would say, of biblical studies at Durham. John Barclay and Stephen Barton were my supervisors. Francis Watson had just come. Loren Stuckenbruck was there. Jimmy Dunn was around. N.T. Wright was the Bishop of Durham. Walter Moberly, obviously, still there. Excellent. Robert Hayward. We had kind of the dream team at that point. They're still doing very well. But I was very fortunate to be there when I was.

**MH:** Especially... Yeah, some of those names... I know the UK has this sort of forced retirement age threshold. So yeah, you were there at the right time, really.

**NG:** Yeah. And C.K. Barrett, if you remember the name, was still alive.

**MH:** Oh, yeah.

**NG:** And I got to hear him preach.

**MH:** Wow!

**NG:** We got to spend time with Charles Cranfield in his house. I think he was 93 at that time. So just a really rich environment. I loved kind of Old and New, working together. Moberly would come to the New Testament seminar, which

was kind of cool. We did a lot with Second Temple Judaism. So I had a really fantastic experience there.

**MH:** Yeah, it sounds like it. Boy. Yeah. I envy you. [laughter] You know, my doctoral experience was not... I would not use the word “fantastic” for it, [laughter] even if it had been a really good one. What you just described is, yeah, you can’t do much better than that.

**NG:** Yeah.

**MH:** That’s great. Hey, well, we want to talk about a couple of your books on the podcast today that will be in the sweet spot for this audience. And for those out there in the audience listening, we’re going to talk first about Nijay’s guide to New Testament commentaries. The official title is *The New Testament Commentary Guide: A Brief Handbook for Students and Pastors*. And that was published by Lexham Press there in Bellingham. And then we’re going to transition at some point to a different book. And the title of that book will be *A Beginner’s Guide to New Testament Studies: Understanding Key Debates*. And that was published by Baker in 2020. So let’s start with the commentary guide, because I’m sure you have a lot of students and you always get the question, “Hey, what’s a good commentary on \_\_\_\_\_?”

**NG:** Mm hmm.

**MH:** Or “What’s your favorite commentary on \_\_\_\_\_?” And I get this a lot in email. And I don’t know what your experience is, but my experience is often, it sounds like the person asking me the question sometimes doesn’t really know what a commentary is. [laughter] Like I’ll get an email like, “Hey, is there any information on Ephesians?” Well, yeah. Go rent a U-Haul truck. [laughter]

**NG:** Yeah. “Have you looked?” Yeah. [laughter]

**MH:** You know? So it’s kind of staggering that there’s this kind of knowledge gap. But your handbook (your commentary guide on the New Testament side) does a lot to really help there. So why don’t you describe the aim of the commentary survey book. Like, when did this pop into your head? What was the circumstance?

**NG:** It’s just like what you said, where I’ve been teaching since kind of the early or mid 2000s. And I get this question all the time. I get in emails and Twitter messages and Facebook messages, people will ask me, “I’m doing a sermon series on the Gospel of John. What should I be reading?” [MH laughs] And, you know, just as you said, the problem isn’t that there’s too little information. The problem is there’s too much.

**MH:** Yep.

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**NG:** And so a student going into a library and trying to find a commentary to read on Romans is overwhelmed if they walk into a theological library. There's just so much.

**MH:** Yep.

**NG:** And it hasn't slowed down. It hasn't stopped. Some people are very cynical about commentaries. As a commentary writer myself, I still see the value in them. I still appreciate that they're being written. But, Michael, people just *need* some recommendations to get the ball rolling.

**MH:** Yep.

**NG:** And so I did this really as just a quick and rough guide to my favorites. I make it very clear it's subjective. Right? If you ask me my favorites on Genesis, they're probably going to be different than your favorites. We may overlap on one or two, but you kind of have your preferences. So I just admit right away that these are my hot takes—my recommendations. I try to give a little bit of information. I try to say, "Okay, if you're looking for a technical commentary, this is a good one. If you're looking for..." You know, what's funny is, people will ask, "What's a *good* commentary?" [MH laughs] And that's such a subjective question.

**MH:** Right.

**NG:** Because what I think is good may be different than what someone else would think is good. Does that mean they're "right?" Does it mean they use my favorite methods? What are you looking for? So I try to do that. But in the Preface material, I try to hash out different kinds of commentaries. Different series have different aims.

**MH:** Do you think... Is that one of the things that makes your survey different? That you are more transparent about your preferences?

**NG:** Yeah! You know, when I've looked at other guides (and there are a few others out there), I would say two things really stand out. One is I read across tradition lines. And so I'm not going to consistently recommend Baptist commentaries or Methodist commentaries or Presbyterian. I read across the gamut and I like people on the "left," so to speak, and I like people on the "right." So I really try to offer a broad spectrum of stuff. I would say that the other thing, too, is I'm attentive to representation. And so I have a section in there on commentaries written by women and people of color. People have told me I've left people out, and I understand that, and I apologize. But I really want people to

be thoughtful about who they're reading. Because, Michael, I think you recognize that people gravitate towards their "in" group when they read commentaries.

**MH:** Sure.

**NG:** And there's nothing wrong with that, as long as you understand that it's helpful to also branch out and read people in other camps so you can get a different perspective. I don't think people do that enough.

**MH:** Yeah. You know, for somebody who's... I'll refer to myself as a New Testament outsider because my field is Hebrew and Semitics. But that's almost an asset, because it sort of forces you to stumble into people. [laughs]

**NG:** Yeah. Absolutely.

**MH:** I have found that when I read a good article, like let's say out of something like DPL (*Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*) and there's a good article on some subject... If I really get a lot out of the article, then when I see that person's name attached to a commentary, that makes me go look because I really enjoyed something they did before. I thought it was really good. It covered all these bases—just did an excellent job. And that'll get me into their work. But that's sort of the poor man's way of reading across boundaries. Because typically, in a reference book you might get an institutional affiliation. I mean, some reference books still drive me nuts by not putting authors next to their entries in there.

**NG:** Yeah, right, I agree.

**MH:** But you know, you'll get that. And you don't necessarily know where they're coming from at all, but it doesn't matter if that article was really helpful. And it helps you get into something else they did. So it is almost an asset to not know. But having said that, let's take that question: "What makes a good commentary?" And invariably this is going to be tied to biblical language training.

**NG:** Mm hmm.

**MH:** So you used the word "technical" before. So why don't you go take us from somebody who has no training in biblical Greek to maybe a seminary graduate level (a year or two of Greek). What's a "good" commentary or a good set?

**NG:** It's kind of like asking, "What's the best tool on a Swiss army knife?"

**MH:** Yeah. [laughs]

**NG:** And so in some sense we have to say, "It depends on what you're needing it for." So, for example, there are some commentaries that are focused on

reception history. And that in and of itself is valuable, even though they might not go really deep into theological questions or things like that.

**MH:** Define “reception history” for our audience.

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**NG:** Reception history is just saying the effects of the text on readers in subsequent eras. So, for example, I really like the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* set by InterVarsity Press, which gets into patristic writers like Chrysostom, Augustine, or Ambrosiaster, and how they interacted with a particular text like Romans or 1 Corinthians or Genesis. And you’re not going to get exegesis out of that. It might not even be really a commentary. So we have resources like that. But let me get back to the general question about “good.” What makes for a good commentary? Let’s go technical and then down to lay level. For technical commentary, I would say fresh reading and interpretation. That doesn’t mean “new.” I take Thomas Oden’s statement that he’ll be glad he never had an original thought in his life [MH laughs]—that idea that the goal isn’t to be innovative. That’s not really how commentaries work. The goal really is to offer kind of a fresh reading of the text, based on good study, and to kind of identify some of those differences from other pieces of scholarship.

**MH:** Yeah, and it can be fresh in a couple of regards. Okay? Well, now we have... Let’s say we have a commentary written in 2020. Well, that commentary is going to interact with preceding commentaries in a given passage. And so you’d get a field expert interacting with other commentaries you might be thinking about using, or may have used. And then there’s also the issue of the very good (and I’m very pro here) propensity in New Testament scholarship where scholars really involve themselves with interacting with the Second Temple Jewish material.

**NG:** Yeah.

**MH:** You’re not going to find that in older New Testament commentaries. You *will* find it in new ones. And so that’s another illustration of what a fresh look at something could be.

**NG:** Yeah, who their dialogue partners are, how they contextualize things. Now there’s all this interest in Greco-Roman literature, especially literature from below, which is personal letters, inscriptions, things like that, that are going to get you into the real life of people. So I really like that. In fact, there’s a whole German commentary series that’s devoted to comparing New Testament texts to documentary papyri—the literature that comes from people’s real lives. And so those kinds of things in technical commentaries are really helpful. Some of my favorites are the Anchor Bible Commentaries. This is if you have seminary training, you’ve studied Greek and Hebrew, you understand categories of syntax, a little bit about linguistics. If they talk about verbal aspect, you can follow along.



So I would say, I really like the Anchor Bible Commentary. I use that a lot. I really like the NIGTC, which is a technical Greek level commentary from Eerdmans. The British ICC (International Critical Commentary) is pretty good, even though it's getting a little bit old.

**MH:** Mm hmm.

**NG:** Michael, you probably say this to students as well, and pastors. I don't recommend buying a whole set.

**MH:** Correct.

**NG:** Unless it's on Logos. I'll talk about that in a moment. [MH laughs] But I don't recommend...

**MH:** I still say that. [laughter]

**NG:** Well, Logos runs... I have a ton of sets, because...

**MH:** You can get a great deal... Okay, that's...

**NG:** If you get a great deal. I bought Hermeneia. I have NIGTC. I have NICNT. I have a lot. But the thing is, they're kind of hit-and-miss from volume to volume in a series, based on the author. Right? And so just like you were saying, you trust certain authors. And so for example, Jimmy Dunn. I have every commentary probably that he's written. He's written for ten or twelve different series. And so you're going to look for names that are people you trust. Gordon Fee, Beverly Gaventa, Richard Hays...

**MH:** I often look for somebody like Father Fitzmyer.

**NG:** Absolutely. Joseph Fitzmyer. Yes.

**MH:** You know? It's like, if Fitzmyer doesn't comment on it, it probably doesn't deserve comment. You know? [laughter]

**NG:** Yeah. He's kind of encyclopedic and has very good judgments—very solid judgments. In terms of the middle level... I call it semi-technical; sometimes we say moderate level or intermediate level. I think we're looking for scholars that can repackage really heavy academic discussions and concepts and bring it to pastors and students who can handle a little more depth, but who can't engage directly with the most technical commentaries.

**MH:** Mm hmm.



20:00

**NG:** And I feel like that's where a lot of seminary students are now. I know you know that seminary education is changing. It's evolving.

**MH:** Yeah.

**NG:** And the idea of the 90-credit hour, 100-credit hour, Master of Divinity is going away. We're getting down to a 72- or 70-credit Master of Divinity. Biblical languages are disappearing.

**MH:** Yep. That's unfortunate.

**NG:** Northern Seminary, where I teach, doesn't have a bona fide Greek language requirement. We do tools. I lament that, but I'm also not a fuddy-duddy that has to live in the past. So I want to *inspire* students to study the biblical language, because that was the most helpful thing I did in seminary.

**MH:** Let me suggest something, since you have status in this community. Okay? I have always advocated... And no one is listening to me, so I'm going to bring it up again. [laughter]

**NG:** Some people are listening.

**MH:** I have advocated that we do a tools-based course for every seminary student (that's your first-year course) so that everyone who gets out feels comfortable handling language tools. They get something out of their biblical languages. It moves them beyond where they were when they started. But then from that point, you get the people who love it and bubble up, and it's like, "Okay, now we're going to put you into a traditional language class," afterwards. So everybody gets served on one level. Everybody gets the appetizer.

**NG:** Yeah.

**MH:** But then you're going to have students that just, "Man, this just lit a fire with me and I can't wait to take Greek and Hebrew the way they did it in the old days."

**NG:** [laughs] Yeah, right.

**MH:** Lots of memorization. I think we can do both. But it just seems like there's this either/or approach to biblical languages that doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me.

**NG:** Yeah. I studied three years of classical Latin in a public high school. I did three years of classical Greek in college. And then I did seminary on top of that. And you know, it's really hard for me to imagine pastors not having that gift of being able to do that language study. And so I went to Gordon Conwell. And I

went to Gordon Conwell almost primarily because of the languages. And at Gordon Conwell I studied Aramaic. I studied Akkadian. All of them in my Master of Divinity. And I studied Greek and Hebrew, obviously. And so it's hard when I see people graduating without any language study at all. But I agree with starting out with kind of a bottom-level, entry-level resource and then seeing how we can fit it in for people that want to do it. I would love that.

**MH:** Yeah. Well, there you go. You can steal that. I don't want credit for it. I just want it to happen. [NG laughs] So steal it at will. You know? [laughs]

**NG:** Yeah. On the lay level of commentary... Oh, so on moderate commentary series, I really like the Black's New Testament Commentary. They don't actually have an Old Testament counterpart, I think.

**MH:** No, I don't think so either.

**NG:** These are these shorter commentaries by really big names like Morna Hooker, Markus Bockmuehl, Ian Boxall. You know, people that are really respected. C.K. Barrett, Jimmy Dunn, Andrew Lincoln. But they offer this nice, readable length and format, which is really great.

**MH:** So your guide is essentially going to take the reader through these characteristics, is that correct?

**NG:** Yeah. In the Introduction, I talk through the features of the different commentaries. And then I kind of go book by book and I just say, "I like this book for this reason." I keep the comments short because most people that want my advice don't need a long explanation. They just need to know that I have some reason why I like that commentary. [laughs]

**MH:** Yeah. Well, in other guides, sometimes the comments about the commentaries aren't evenly distributed. So if you can hem yourself in, you get to say more about more of the options.

**NG:** That's right. Yeah. Because I wanted to recommend four or five or six. In fact, you might know this, but I'm doing a blog series right now on *Old Testament commentaries*, and I actually recruit Old Testament... I should get you to do one. But I recruit Old Testament scholars to give their top six picks for a particular book. So we just did, for example, 1 and 2 Chronicles with Bill Schniedewind. And it's great just to... / value that, just having an expert recommend something and giving a one or two or three sentence explanation. That's kind of what we're looking for in this marketplace where there are thousands and thousands of commentaries.

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**MH:** What would you recommend, though, in today's seminary climate? Or, let's not restrict it to seminary. I mean, you have a lot of... You've got seminaries. You've got Bible colleges. You've got Christian colleges and universities. You've got a lot of grammars that have been published out there for self-study. How would you feel about sort of a minimal recommendation in language facility and where that would put you in relationship to some specific commentaries or commentary sets? What would you recommend there?

**NG:** Um... You know, trying to grab a book, even a short one, and learn by yourself is more difficult than most people think it is. I can't tell you how many people I've run into that have said, "I'm going to teach myself Hebrew. I'm going to teach myself Greek." And I imagine less than 1% are actually able to do that, just because language study is hard. So what I recommend to people is, find something in your area regionally. If there's a Bible college or a seminary, find one in your area and see if you can take the language locally. If not, then what I recommend is finding some video course and doing it with a group of people. Try to find five people (because three of them are going to drop out). [MH laughs] And sign up to do... I think Zondervan has stuff.

**MH:** Yep.

**NG:** BibleMesh, Biblingo. I mean, there's a few different... I don't know what Logos has, but I'm sure they have stuff like this, where you can learn Greek or Hebrew. But I recommend, you've got to do it with a group of people. Because trying to do it on your own... Unless you're just a language expert, where you know French, German, whatever.

**MH:** Yeah.

**NG:** Unless you have those skills, you need a group of people. If you do, it's possible, and I recommend you do a video course.

**MH:** That's good advice. Because typically when you're in an academic setting, you always have a couple of friends that you're going to quiz each other on vocabulary.

**NG:** Absolutely. Yes. Flash cards.

**MH:** You know, these study groups sort of just emerge.

**NG:** Yes.

**MH:** That's good advice. I'm going to just throw out a few sets here (that I think a number of people in the audience are going to know) that you haven't already mentioned. Tell us where you would put them, in terms of your buckets—your

tiers of commentaries—and your assessment as to how much of a language ability you need to have. So let's start with the NIC (the New International Commentary). It's an older set. It's complete. Some of the volumes I guess have been redone by now. But what do you think of that?

**NG:** It's fantastic. I would put it as one of my go-tos (the NICNT and the NICOT). In terms of levels, it kind of depends on the author. Some of the authors are a little more technical in the way they engage the text than others. But I would put it in that middle level. I think you might... It might be helpful to have read Maltz's *Greek for the Rest of Us*, where he gives kind of that really basic crash course in the terminology that scholars use when we talk about Greek. I think there's probably a *Hebrew for the Rest of Us*. And so when a scholar talks about genitive or dative or participle, just knowing what those terms mean is helpful for that kind of series. But I would say a seminary-trained pastor should be able to read the NICNT.

**MH:** Yeah, that's where I would put it, too. Logos did the *Learn to Use Greek and Hebrew*. And that was... We were looking at terminology, how to use tools, and then understand the terms. Those were really the only two goals of that particular effort. So if you have Logos, you could get that. I mean, the whole course is pricey. But there's a glossary that went with it (and you could get that separately) that would just help you with terminology or run your exegetical guide and it'll just pop up. You could hover over a grammatical term, and, "Oh, there's a definition." So yeah, anything like that that will help you know what they're talking about. Because there's a lot of merit to just being able to pick up a commentary like the NIC and being able to follow the discussion.

**NG:** Yes.

**MH:** Nobody's suggesting that to use a commentary you have to be able to produce your own translation on the fly. [NG laughs] That's not what either of us are saying here. But can you follow the discussion? That's where it's most helpful. How about Tyndale? Tyndale always sort of gets mentioned in connection with maybe a good tool for pastors. How do you feel about it?

**NG:** Yeah, the Tyndale Old Testament and New Testament commentaries are these little... I remember... I don't know if they changed the cover. They have changed the cover. But I remember these little black books. Someone gave me the whole Old Testament set when I was in seminary, which was huge. So they're definitely at that lay level. They're short. I remember N.T. Wright did Colossians (one of only a few commentaries that Wright has written), and it's fantastic. I would say it is kind of quick exposition, theologically oriented, devotional in some ways. I think that's great. If I were a pastor, I wouldn't start there. What I encourage pastors to do is to use reference resources early on in their sermon prep.

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**MH:** Mm hmm. Yeah.

**NG:** Things like dictionaries and reference works and lexicons, if they can, like the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, and then some exegetical commentaries to kind of help them connect the dots. But then to use devotional stuff after they've really done their own inductive study. Because they will give you some of the theological themes. They'll get you into some of the application kinds of issues. People use those as go-tos, and I think that weakens the pastor's ability to do their own work and to come up with their own insight.

**MH:** Yeah. And listeners should know that some of these reference works that we've mentioned, you could go to my website ([drms.com](http://drms.com)) and look under "Books" and it'll say something like "Mike's Recommended Reading." And there are a number of these tools that are listed there. But I agree with the emphasis on reference material upfront. A lot of times we think... Or people don't realize that there are these specialized dictionaries that can give you an article on "redemption." There's theological topics. There's exegetical topics that, before you even hit a commentary, it can just give you the lay of the land. And then you sort of have that in your head, and you go back and try to do your own work, and then consult somebody on the back end. I think that's good advice.

So the last question I want to ask in relation to this book... And again, for listeners, the book is *The New Testament Commentary Guide: A Brief Handbook for Students and Pastors*, by Nijay Gupta. The last question is, "What are some things to look out for in commentaries?" Sometimes I'll tell people if I know they've had a little bit of language training that there are some commentaries where you can just literally get lost. [NG laughs] The jargon is so deep and wide that it's almost like you never really get to the exegetical nuggets. It's all theoretical, or there's turf here to be defended. So what are some things to look out for?

**NG:** [sigh] That's a good question. Um... I would just do some research on the author. I mean, again, a lot of these commentators are hit or miss. And it doesn't mean you can't take a chance on someone that hasn't published a whole lot. But most of us rely on our tried-and-true expert commentary writers. There are some people who have really mastered the art of writing commentaries. And Old Testament is someone like Tremper Longman, whom I've long appreciated. Mark Boda, who's a friend of mine, who writes really good commentaries. Danny Carroll is another one that does good work in commentaries. Walter Brueggemann in his own way, in his own kind of gritty, in-your-face kind of way, does great work in that. [MH laughs] Terrance Fretheim. So there are these tried-and-true people that we rely on in New Testament. Gordon Fee is a good example of someone who I just... Anthony Thiselton. People that we just trust. R.T. France. But what do I look for? That's a good question. [laughs]

**MH:** I love France's... Again, there's an example of a guy I never would have found had I not read something he wrote that wasn't a commentary.

**NG:** Yeah, absolutely.

**MH:** I just really like his commentary on Matthew, for instance.

**NG:** Yeah.

**MH:** Yeah, he does good stuff. But there's a Gospel example. You could pick up France and he's not going to get the reader lost in questions about Q.

**NG:** Yeah, that's right. He's going to get to the heart.

**MH:** Or tradition history and redaction criticism, you know? For those people who need to care about that, they're going to know what the technical sets are and they're going to gravitate toward that. But you don't want somebody with "I'm in seminary" or "I'm fresh out of seminary," or "I've got a year or two of language under my belt," and you don't want to hand them something like that. Because for them it's going to be gobbledegook.

**NG:** Yeah.

**MH:** It's going to not have a lot of pay-off to it.

35:00

**NG:** Absolutely. Yeah. So I would say... So the Introduction to my book has the descriptions of all the series—the formal descriptions. So I encourage people to read through those. A lot of people skip the Preface and all of that and go straight to the commentary. But you want to know what the aims and objectives of the commentary are. Some of them focus on literary tools. Some of them focus on social science. Some of them focus on Greco-Roman backgrounds, like the Hermeneia tends to do that.

**MH:** Yeah. They'll tell you.

**NG:** Yeah. They'll tell you. Yeah. And you might look at the Index and see kind of what kinds of things they're citing, who they're citing. There are a lot of little clues that'll tell you what you're going to get out of the book.

**MH:** Yeah. Well, let's transition here to your other book, which I think this audience is also going to love: *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Studies: Understanding Key Debates*. Believe it or not, there's lots of things to debate when it comes to the Bible. [NG laughs] A little bit of a shocker.

**NG:** Yeah, right.

**MH:** For this audience, of course, that's not going to be news. But what Nijay has done here is he's written a book that's New Testament-oriented. So if you were about to sort of jump into more in depth biblical study (either on your own, but especially in a classroom setting), what is the lay of the land when it comes to fill-in-the-blank topic? Stuff in the Gospels, stuff in the Epistles, the book of Revelation. I mean, there are just minefields in every one of these areas, really in most books. There's going to be a minefield somewhere. So this is a book that will take readers through the minefields—help you navigate what's going on. So the first thing I'm going to ask you here is, you have a beginner's guide. Define "beginner." Who was in your head? Who was the target audience for this?

**NG:** It'll be helpful to know a little bit about the background of the book, because the title changed from what I proposed. I like the new title, but the old title helps explain the book. So about 20 years ago, I came across a book that you may know about, Michael, called *Across the Spectrum of Theology*.

**MH:** No, I don't know it, actually.

**NG:** You don't know that one? I think it was Greg Boyd and someone else. What they did was they took 20 or 30 hot topic theology topics like free will and predestination or various views on the millennium (eschatology) and different views on communion and baptism and all that. And they basically just did a really short: "Here is view one. Here is view two. Here is view three." And I thought, "Wouldn't that be really helpful in biblical studies?" [MH laughs] Because there are these debates. And you know what? I did not go to a Christian college before seminary. So my first week of seminary, I didn't know anything about anything. I was so unaware, uninitiated. And so people would talk about the Synoptic Problem and I was clueless, but I didn't want to ask because I felt like I would look stupid.

**MH:** Mm hmm.

**NG:** Or even today, students will quietly come up to me and say, "What *is* the New Perspective on Paul, exactly?" [laughs] You know?

**MH:** Right.

**NG:** And so I wrote this book for the uninitiated. So these are probably college students, seminary students, or pastors who want to eavesdrop on the academic conversations in New Testament studies. But they would love kind of a recap. So my wife and I watch a TV show. We might watch the recap before the next season. Right? You don't want to watch the whole season again. But you want the recap. And so this is kind of my recap of these hot topics like the Synoptic Problem or Paul and the Law, or views on Revelation.



**MH:** I like the word “eavesdrop.” I don't know if that was in your original title conception.

**NG:** No, it was going to be *Across the Spectrum of New Testament Studies*.

**MH:** Okay, just to riff off Boyd's. Yeah.

**NG:** But *Beginner's Guide*, the idea is you want to... Let's say you go to SBL (Society of Biblical Literature). Or let's say you go to ETS or a regional conference and you want to be able to follow the discussions—the debates—that are already in the background of what the scholars are talking about. I use this book to help get people off and running when they hear a term like “apocalyptic Paul,” “participation in Christ.” Right? I help to get them off the ground running with that.

**MH:** Yeah, “What are they talking about?” “Well, here you go. Over here on page whatever, there it is.” Well, let's just give a few examples. Let's just start with the Gospels, real quickly. You can give us the one to two sentence definition here. What *is* the Synoptic Problem? And why should the lay person or the pastor or the Bible student care enough so that they would pick up your book and learn a little bit about how scholars talk about it?

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**NG:** The Synoptic Problem is this idea of setting the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) side by side and noticing at the same time there are lots of similarities (why are they so similar?), but then also differences. So that the classic difference that I like to point out is the Lord's Prayer. We use the Matthew version of the Lord's Prayer in most of our Christian traditions. But Luke has a version as well that most people don't even think about. Why are they so different? They're not completely different. But why are there two versions of the Lord's Prayer, when there's only one Lord? [MH laughs] That gets us off the ground and thinking about, “Okay. Is it a mistake? Is one of them wrong? Did one of them miscopy off of the other?” This raises all these questions about the interrelationship between Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And so I was trying to figure out (so this gets you behind the scenes of the book here), how many views do I have? Do I have two views? Do I have three views? Do I have four views? I could go on and on and on. I decided to break it down to kind of a really cutting-edge conversation between a more literary view of the relationship between the Gospels and a more oral tradition view. So a literary view would say, “Somebody copied off of someone else. They're using sources and they're copying and they're editing.” And there are all different views on, “Was Mark first? Was Matthew first? Is there a Q? Is there not a Q?” A different view would say, “It's not so much that they're making intentional decisions to change things, as much as traditions go out verbally into the world, and sometimes they go out in different forms, just like I'm giving a lecture in Abilene, TX, this week, and I gave the same lectures a year and a half ago, and the lectures are going to be slightly different.”

They're not going to be completely different, but they're going to be slightly different. There's some adaptability going on there. And so why does this matter to pastors? You know, people notice these things and they start to question the Bible and they say, "Oh, the Bible's full of contradictions." It actually isn't. And the stuff going on there can be explained, even though we don't know exactly the right answer. And so this really helps to use scholarship that's been around for a very long time to answer some basic questions that people have about the Bible.

**MH:** Right. But you never get to it unless you're familiar with the terminology and who's fighting for what piece of turf. Yeah.

**NG:** [laughs] Yeah.

**MH:** Well, what about John? You have a chapter entitled "The Fourth Gospel and History." Is that controversial? Are there people who doubt the historicity of John?

**NG:** Yeah. Oh my goodness. [MH laughs] Yeah. When you read John, you notice it's different. There's one famous scholar, Robert Kysar, who refers to John as "the maverick Gospel." So John is different than the others. There's a reason why he's not a part of the "synoptic tradition." You don't have an emphasis on the kingdom of God, even though the language is there. You have these unique "I am" sayings...

**MH:** Yeah, a lot of unique material.

**NG:** ...in the Synoptics. Jesus is teaching in these pithy little statements (little one-off lines, little tweets). And then in the Gospel of John he gives these long speeches that go on sometimes for chapters. Now scholars have long questioned the Gospel of John's historical accuracy because Jesus is very self-aware of his divinity, which many people think is an evolutionary process in Christian scholarship, where, "Okay, now, this is a fabrication of a well-set-on-its-way Christianity." You have things that seem like anachronisms. Jesus refers to his enemies as "the Jews" or "Judeans." And isn't Jesus Jewish? You know? Why is he... And then when he says to his disciples, "They will kick you out of *their* synagogues." Why isn't it "*our* synagogues"? You know?

**MH:** Right.

**NG:** So there are these questions about anachronism, perhaps. So for many, many decades in the Modern period, the Gospel of John has been kind of thrown out as a resource to use in the study of the historical Jesus—the real Jesus that lived on earth. *But* I would say in the last 40-50 years, there's been major pushback against that. Scholars like Richard Bauckham, Marianne Meye Thompson, Paul Anderson, and others, have said, first of all the Synoptics are

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not objective. The Synoptics have theological lenses as well. Secondly, there are some things in the Gospel of John that actually seem more realistic. For example, in the Synoptics, Jesus waits *years* before going to Jerusalem, whereas in the Gospel of John he goes regularly. And what makes more sense for a faithful Jew? That they're going to not go to Jerusalem for years? [laughs] Or that they're going to go regularly? Some of the geographic elements or archeological things give some validation to the Gospel of John. And the idea that Jesus is going to teach in long blocks.

**MH:** Mm hmm.

**NG:** You know? It makes perfect sense. You know, I don't teach in two-minute blocks. I teach in three-hour blocks.

**MH:** Right. [laughs]

**NG:** So this has opened up new questions. That doesn't mean that these things are now solved. I'll tell you something interesting that's in the book, but your listeners are going to be interested. When N.T. Wright wrote his big book on Jesus in the '90s called *Jesus and the Victory of God* (he'd been working on that for years and years), he did not include the Gospel of John as one of the conversation partners in that study.

**MH:** Wow, interesting.

**NG:** And he was asked years later, "Why?" And he said, "It's not because I don't believe in the Gospel of John. It's because my book wouldn't be read and given a fair hearing by *other* scholars."

**MH:** Yeah, because they were so bent in the other direction.

**NG:** Absolutely. And so... That was raised in a conference that was in Wright's honor at Wheaton years later, in the 2000s, where they said, "Why didn't you include John?" He said that, but then he said, "I could probably include it now," meaning, "The conversation has changed." There would still be people that dismissed John, but there's more openness. SBL has run a long series on *John, Jesus, and History*, complicating those kinds of facile dismissals of John.

**MH:** Sure. Now, of course, "Jesus and Paul"... You have a chapter with that title. And then you have another chapter: "Paul's Theological Perspective." And you have still another chapter: "Paul and the Jewish Law." And I believe I told you that we recently had Kent Yinger on to talk about the New Perspective. So you take those three... This audience will be familiar with the basics of what the New Perspective is. But those three chapters... What's different about them? Like...

**NG:** Oh, how are they different?

**MH:** Yeah. How are they different?

**NG:** Yeah, so the Jesus and Paul... I feel like we should have a seminary course on this for every seminary and every student. Because there is a longstanding scholarly view that Jesus and Paul are just miles apart (in their thinking, in their theology, and all this). So there's this old kind of attitude that...

**MH:** And that has filtered down into pop culture. Like the Fantasy Channel. Excuse me, the *History* Channel.

**NG:** [laughs] Yeah, yeah.

**MH:** Well, this is always what you get. They're always pitting Jesus against Paul and Paul against Jesus. You know, Paul's the renegade...

**NG:** Right! Like Paul betrayed Jesus. And I give a quote from *The Last Temptation of Christ*, because there's a famous scene in there that's along those lines. But there's this view that Jesus talked about kingdom and discipleship and Paul talks about saints and he talks about judgment, and he talks about justification by faith. But there's actually more coherence there than people recognize. So I talk through two views. One is basically, "Did Paul deviate from Jesus?" And another view is, "Is Paul more just kind of taking the baton of the gospel and taking it to another place, but still carrying Jesus forward?" So more unified versus divergent. This helps because I talk to my students about the problem of a canon-within-a-canon in our preaching.

**MH:** Yeah.

**NG:** We gravitate toward certain texts.

**MH:** Boy, isn't that true?

**NG:** So one church may be a Sermon on the Mount church. "We will preach justice. We'll preach 'turn the other cheek.' We'll preach reconciliation. We'll preach economics." But they don't really get into the heart of Paul's theology: union with Christ and all of that. Then other churches will do a ten-year study on Romans and they won't bother to even look at James or look at Mark. And this is dangerous. And so I think bringing Jesus and Paul in the conversation helps us to see how we can make sure our church really does have a good amount of fine balance.

**MH:** Do you have a recommendation in the book for that topic, like a resource you point people to? Or do you think that's still lacking?

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**NG:** No, there's some great stuff. So David Wenham (a British scholar) has written numerous books. And I would recommend all of his books. But he has three or four books in this category. They're all very good. I don't remember all the names off the top of my head, but he has good ones. Jimmy Dunn has one called *Jesus, Paul, and the Gospels*. And it's kind of a collection of essays. But it does a lot in this area of, "Hey, maybe Jesus and Paul were not that different, even though they use different terminology sometimes."

**MH:** Oh, that's good. I thought it was interesting that you devoted a chapter to pseudonymity in the New Testament letters. So what's the current state of that issue? Do you want to define that issue for our audience?

**NG:** Yeah, this is a passion of mine.

**MH:** Yeah, where are things falling out here?

**NG:** So I wrote a commentary on Colossians about seven or eight years ago and I had to dig into the question of pseudonymity. Pseudonymity literally means "false name," that a letter may say it's written by Paul, but it's actually written by someone else. And so scholars break up Paul's letters into three categories: authentic, disputed, and forged or false or whatever you want to call it (pseudonymous). So authentic: scholars talk about Romans, 1 and 1 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, Galatians, 1 Thessalonians, as authentic—as genuinely written by Paul himself (the apostle). And then you have books that are disputed (like 2 Thessalonians, perhaps Colossians), where there are some things in there that are suspicious. Maybe it's a theological concept that doesn't seem like it fits with Romans or 1 Corinthians. Maybe it's a turn of phrase or style. So I don't know if you've experienced this, Michael, but someone might message you on Facebook and say they're so-and-so, but they're actually not. [MH laughs] This has happened to me a couple of times.

**MH:** No, I usually get, "Hey, are you really saying this, or selling that," when somebody makes fake Facebook accounts of *me*. So I usually get that...

**NG:** [laughs] Oh, there you go. [laughs] So see, someone else is pretending to be you.

**MH:** Yep.

**NG:** And people may be able to sniff that out because the way the person's talking isn't the way that *you* talk. And so people say that about Paul's letters sometimes—that it doesn't fit. And then you have these groups (maybe the Pastoral Epistles) where scholars say, "These cannot be written by Paul because they're full of anachronisms. The language doesn't seem like Paul—the argumentation." So there are, I would say, three views. One view is on a

particular letter that's authentic (meaning it can be traced back to Paul himself). Another is pseudonymous or a forgery, which means someone has pretended to be Paul and they're trying to pull a fast one on you. But then there's another category that doesn't really enter the conversation sometimes. I take the terminology from Howard Marshall, which is "allonymity," which means it's written by someone other than Paul, but maybe within a Pauline school.

**MH:** Yeah, someone who... *Allos*: another. Another alongside, yeah.

**NG:** That's right, yeah. So it's not meant to be deceptive. It's not meant to trick you. But I think about, for example, there was a scholar who was working on a commentary in the Gospel of John. He died before he finished it, and so the editor went into his computer, found the files, put it together, put some wrapping on it, and then published it. And so there's some interesting intermixture there of the scholars themselves [crosstalk], but then someone afterwards.

**MH:** Mm hmm. Yeah, it's almost like the "autograph" question. Well, okay, that's a question, but how much does it really matter? [laughs]

**NG:** That's right. So where's the state of conversation? I mean, scholars are all across the spectrum there. There are some people holding to a hard line of pseudonymity. I will say, *I* have detected a softening of those categories. N.T. Wright has said in his big book on Paul and the faithfulness of God, he thinks we need to reset the chessboard because we've kind of painted ourselves into a corner on this issue. We've taken too much for granted on this issue and moved on without really revisiting. Luke Timothy Johnson's recently written on this. I really like his approach. He basically says Paul uses teams of writers and he seems to have different teams in different scenarios. So he had a "Corinthian team" of writers that helped him write that. And he had...

**MH:** You could see how that would work. You know?

**NG:** Yeah! He had another team that may have helped him with Romans and Galatians. He had another team with 1 and 2 Thessalonians, let's say. And then maybe another team with the Pastorals and another team with Colossians and Ephesians. And if we think along those lines, then the heart of Paul may be in all those texts, but style may change from text to text. And when we look at, for example, the letters of Cicero, sometimes Cicero wrote his own letters, sometimes he dictated, and sometimes he handed it off to an amanuensis. There are all different ways to conceive of authorship.

55:00 **MH:** Yeah. How do we even know how the amanuensis situation worked? And did it work the same way for each person? I mean, I can sit here and "dictate" a book, but if I've already told my scribe, "Okay, you're going to listen to what I say now and put that into good... Make that good stuff. You know?" [NG laughs] "Put

that into good language. You know who the target audience is. And then I'm going to go read it." And it's like, "Yeah, good job. I like the way you put that over there."

**NG:** Exactly.

**MH:** We tend to think it's like a stenographer situation when it may not have been that at all.

**NG:** Our best understanding is, there were these professionals who were letter secretaries. And they were more than stenographers; they...

**MH:** They were human? [laughs]

**NG:** I think of it like sending a cover letter or a CV to a professional to kind of make it look professional. Right? Or think about the president, right? And the speech writers and the press secretary. They're going to... They may take those ideas. But then don't we attribute, "Oh, this was Biden's best speech," or, "this was Bush's best speech." Right? Or "Obama." They didn't write their speech, but they worked closely with the person that did. And so we still attribute it to them.

**MH:** Yeah, they're going to approve the content. And they're going to go over... I mean, I've read a lot... I like American history, and specifically 1860 through 1960. And this is nothing new. I mean, *all* the presidents would do this. They would have other people write their speeches and then they would go through them, either with or without their chief of staff and other important people. And you'd go, "Say it this way and not that way." But then, "Well, 90% of it, that's pretty good. That sounds like me. It reflects what I think, even though I didn't touch it." You know? [laughs]

**NG:** Yeah. Also, we work so hard, assuming that we can detect someone's true voice. And this was one of Johnson's big concerns. And the example I like to give along these lines is Charlie Chaplin entered a Charlie Chaplin look-alike contest and lost. [MH laughs] Bob Hope came in third.

**MH:** Oh my gosh.

**NG:** The idea behind that is, why would the judges have not recognized Charlie Chaplin? Either they didn't truly understand what he looked like *or* he didn't look like himself that day.

**MH:** Mm hmm.



**NG:** In either case, we're sometimes bad at digging down to "real history." We have all these tools, but those tools fail us sometimes. And we have to recognize, people don't act predictably all the time.

**MH:** I'm going to ask you one more question about this particular book. I'm hoping the audience gets a feel for what this book is like, what it does. Again, it's like you're... I'm going to go back to the word "eavesdropping." You're eavesdropping on a discussion between scholars that hold different points of view on any given topic. And that's really useful for the beginning student to get the lay of the land, get a feel for the vocabulary, what is meant and what is not meant, what the options are, and why those options exist. It's very, very useful. My last question is, you had one chapter that was not intuitive for me at the get-go, when I'm looking through the book: "The New Testament and the Roman Empire." Where are the different views there? Is there somebody saying it (the Roman Empire) didn't happen during the New Testament? I didn't quite on the surface... I couldn't tell what that one was about.

**NG:** You know, this is probably one of the hottest topics right now in the New Testament studies for the last 25-30 years. So there's been all this interest in how the early Christians navigated the political realm and to what degree they interfaced with the Empire, and then what attitudes they would have toward the Empire.

**MH:** Mm hmm.

**NG:** So if we go back to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we didn't talk a lot about Caesar in New Testament studies. We were getting into Dead Sea Scrolls. We were getting into all kinds of stuff in the Second Temple literature and we were just starting to retranslate Josephus and Philo. We were getting deeper into some of that stuff, but we weren't really touching the Roman world. Now prior to that there had been lots of interest in Greek religion. But when we talk about living on the ground in the Roman world, politics is a big deal.

**MH:** Mm hmm.

**NG:** You pledged allegiance essentially to the genius of Caesar on a regular basis, that kind of thing. So we saw this emergence of questions about Paul and Jesus and politics and power and the Empire. And what you end up seeing (and you know this, Michael, very well) is a pendulum that swings in one direction. And that direction was that the early Christians were anti-imperial. And so one view is that the early Christians used terms like "Lord, gospel, savior, Son of God" as a way to kind of thumb the nose at or put the middle finger up...

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**MH:** Yeah, stick it to 'em.

**NG:** Yeah. At the Roman Empire, the Roman emperor, the people in power. And this is to show how subversive the early Christians were. You know, they're turning the world upside down. They're proclaiming another king other than Caesar—all of that. And so there's a lot of energy around that because this was the Bush administration era. There were questions about the abuse of empire—the abuse of power. And this spilled over into our study of the Roman world. Then we saw the pendulum swing back the other way, towards more caution. People like John Barclay said, "And yet, Paul doesn't ever name the emperor or any political figure." The early Christians didn't picket. They weren't overtly concerned about changing political policy. They didn't revolt. They encouraged slaves to obey. They encouraged wives to be submissive. You have all of this in the New Testament, even though in Revelation you do have the calling-out. Revelation is more extreme on the anti-imperial end.

**MH:** Pay your taxes, yeah.

**NG:** But I tried to figure out, how do I talk about this in this book? You know, it's interesting. When you talk about free will and predestination, those views have been around for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. But this stuff was all new. And so I had to come up with my own category. So early Christianity or New Testament *against* empire? But then no one really thinks they're pro-empire, so I said, "negotiating empire" as the other view—where it's messier. There's more of a mix there.

**MH:** See, you missed your chance to throw in some Star Wars vocabulary there. [laughs]

**NG:** You know, I might actually... If not there, then another book, I might have a reference to Rogue One. Because Rogue One does a beautiful job of taking...

**MH:** That's an awesome film.

**NG:** ...making more overt the political dimensions of the Star Wars universe. And like I tell all my students, Star Wars, Hunger Games, and probably Dune as well, they all conjure up Roman imperial—those stories from the Roman imperial world. I mean, Star Wars and Hunger Games basically rip off of the Roman world.

**MH:** Yeah. Well, I like when scholars will put in on the sly some of these pop culture references. Because A) they're effective. And B) it's just fun. You know? [laughs]

**NG:** It is fun. Well, I use one from the Avengers in a book I'm working on now where Nick Fury says to Loki... No, Loki says, "I came to bring peace." And then

Nick Fury says, “You say ‘peace,’ but I think you mean the other thing.” [laughter] I mean, that is a callback to the Pax Romana.

**MH:** Hmm. Well, this has been good for our audience to get exposed to you and especially these two resources. And you, like I said at the beginning, have written a lot of content. And you mentioned you have some commentaries and, of course, some other books. But I think for this audience to get them started in practical ways on (in this case) the New Testament—the lay of the land, what do New Testament scholars really talk about? What do they sit around and jibber jabber about? What are the sessions about at these academic meetings? And who’s fighting whom? This particular book that you’ve written here on *The Beginner’s Guide to New Testament Studies* is really, really useful for that. And I highly recommend that. And the same thing for the commentary guide. I mean, that’s a bit more... We’ve seen those before. But now we’ve got a good, up-to-date one. And we’ve got something that is current and also where the author does us the favor of kind of telling us where you’re coming from. I’m always in favor of that. It irritates me when authors try to hide who they are. I don’t think that serves anybody very well.

**NG:** It’ll help you to know, Michael, that Baker is producing an Old Testament version of that now.

**MH:** Oh, good.

**NG:** *The Beginner’s Guide*.

**MH:** Good. Because that needs to be done. This is just really useful stuff. So for any Bible student, anyone entering seminary, even if you’re in the pastorate, these are the kinds of tools that we enjoy recommending here. So I’m very glad we could work this out. And thanks for being with us on the podcast.

**NG:** Absolutely. It’s been a pleasure talking to you.

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**TS:** Alright, Mike. Another good interview. He’s actually speaking in Abilene this week. I’m going to try to make that. He’s got two lectures at Abilene Christian University. So I’m going to try to go up there and listen to that. And I wish this podcast came before, because I could say, “Anybody in the Abilene area, we could meet up and go together.” So I might do that maybe on Facebook or something. But...

**MH:** Hey, you never know.

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1:05:00 **TS:** Yeah, it might be fun to go to. That's good stuff. Well, Mike, what are the names of his two books again, real quick?

**MH:** The first one that we talked about was *The New Testament Commentary Guide: A Brief Handbook for Students and Pastors*. And that was published by Lexham Press. And the second book was *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Studies: Understanding Key Debates*. And that was published by Baker.

**TS:** And don't forget, you can get a discount on both of those books at [NakedBiblePodcast.com](http://NakedBiblePodcast.com). Go get the code and get you a discount, Mike. Next week, we have another great interview.

**MH:** Yep. We're going to talk to Craig Keener, who we have... The last time we did conference interviews (these little 10-15 minutes with scholars)... We have had Craig on before to talk about whatever he was working on and his research, and some of that has now sort of come to fruition. Craig authored a massive two-volume set on miracles—miracles in biblical literature, the Patristic period, all the way up to the Modern era. It's a massive reference resource. But he took that and he produced a trimmed-down summary of miraculous things that happen today. And so it's that second book that we want to talk about with him. So we're going to have him on next week. We've been waiting to do this until the book actually ships. So this is a brand new book. And it's going to be one that I think this audience is going to be really, really interested in.

**TS:** Alright, Mike. Well, this show is starting to turn into a miracle show, too, with us (me and you). [MH laughs] So that's probably spot-on, to have him on.

**MH:** And you know, our audience probably thinks this is *more* of a miracle, but we didn't talk about Fantasy Football.

**TS:** Oh, I know! We forgot. But you ended up beating me, so that's why I'm not talking about it. So it's not a fun thing to talk about, Mike. [laughs] So we'll move on. Well, with that, we want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.