

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 401

Revelation Q&A, Part 2

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Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

### Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions about Revelation:

- Will humanity before the return of Christ have a different destiny than humans after the return of Christ will have? [3:05]
- How do spiritual rebels know how the story will end and yet believe they can alter the ending? [8:30]
- Do people go to Sheol when they die? [13:20]
- Will one of the elohim or humans sin again in the New Eden and return us right back to where we started? [21:05]
- If death is destroyed in Revelation 20, why does Isaiah 65 speak about those who live full lives and ultimately die? [27:00]
- Please give some positive and negative feedback on Beale's Revelation commentary [33:55]
- How do current geopolitical conditions fit in with our reading of Revelation, and are we in a repeating cycle? [37:30]
- If the Beast and the Prostitute are also Rome, what do we do with the fact that the Beast turns against the Prostitute? [54:00]
- When will the imprisoned Watchers be released? [58:55]
- Is there a connection between Ezekiel 9:4 and Revelation 13:17 regarding the Mark? [1:03:45]

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 401: Revelation Q&A, Part 2. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! Let's just keep the party going! And we've got our Revelation Q&A questions.

**MH:** Yeah, we've only got a thousand more questions, Trey, so... [laughs]

**TS:** Exactly. We're doing our best here. You picked some good ones. I don't know if we're going to be able to get to all of them, but we're expecting to have at least four parts. So we're going to get to a *lot* of them.

**MH:** Yeah. I should say, some of the questions, as I read through (there's a huge pile), if I know that the question was specifically addressed in one of the episodes that we did on Revelation, I weeded that out because you'll just have to listen to the whole series. And for those of you who are using the opportunity to ask me five questions instead of one, I usually picked one or maybe two really good ones to sort of truncate that a little bit. But I'm on to you. [laughter]

**TS:** We only had, like 30,000 questions, Mike.

**MH:** Right, right. We've got to get as many people in here as we can.

**TS:** Well, why don't we just get to it.

**MH:** Sure.

**TS:** I'm going to carry the theme across. People have left some comments on our Facebook congratulating us on our 400<sup>th</sup>. So I'm going to continue reading some of those comments, Mike, with the questions.

**MH:** Sure.

**TS:** Our first one is from Justin. And he says:

The Naked Bible Podcast has been the single most biblically enlightening, genuine, well-rounded approach to studying God's Word that I have found to date. So thankful for all the amazing effort you guys have put forth for the benefit of the Church. Thank you.

**MH:** Yeah, absolutely.

**TS:** And then Alberto says:

Thanks for letting the Lord use you, Mike and Trey. I didn't think the Bible was very interesting until I was about 15 or so. And then got into Christian Middle Earth and got into wacky stuff. [laughter] Then my dad started talking to me about this Heiser guy, who talks about weird stuff in the Bible. I was hooked. I've since majored in Bible and went to seminary and feel called to continue studying and sharing all the great stuff God has revealed in Scripture. Thanks again, and may the Lord grant you many more years in his service.

Now that's awesome.

**MH:** Yeah, that's amazing. I thought that one was going to end by him saying, "I went to seminary and got kicked out." But that's good. [laughter]

**TS:** Alright. Well, let's kick it off with Christopher, who has our first question:

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3:05

**With everything Dr. Heiser has taught, it has made me wonder if all of humanity up until the return of Christ has a different/unique destiny than humans after the return of Christ will have? I know that's an odd question, but if I may explain, I wonder if we become like the sons of God that are on Yahweh's Divine Council and we will then rule/oversee the new humanity (restored to what Adam & Eve were meant to be) and we will then be the new sons of God assigned over the new Gentile nations who will guide the new humanity into worshipping and serving God while serving Christ who will rule from the New Jerusalem on the New Earth with a new Israel that will actually be a priest to these new Gentile nations?**

5:00

**MH:** We actually had a similar question I think in the last Q&A about what we'll be doing, or some wording to that effect. Again, I think we need to think of life in Eden as shared partnership—partnership in dominion—with God, with the Lord, and with Jesus, and with each other. Now we all have equal status, so there's not going to be any more Jew/Gentile distinction. The Church, which is the circumcision-neutral body of Christ, now takes full form in the New Jerusalem, the New Earth, the new Eden. And we don't have these distinctions anymore. So we're not going to be in a position where we rule over other believers generally, or even more specifically, like we're the new Israel that rules over other Gentiles. These distinctions arose from rebellion (specifically when it comes to the Gentile nations) that gets rooted in Deuteronomy 32 (the Babel event—when the nations are put under judgment and assigned to lesser gods as part of the judgment).

So all that is done away with. We have equal footing. We have equal status. These distinctions are removed. And for the Church now they should be removed... I mean, the Epistles present the Church this way, that there's one man, one body of Christ, one people of God, not two. These division lines are done away with. We struggle now to make that a reality. But in the New Earth it'll be the default reality. So as such, we're not going to be teaching unbelievers either, or other believers how to worship. Everybody's going to be a believer. Everybody's going to be glorified. Everybody's going to be part of God's entourage—part of his family. This is what God wanted at the beginning when there were only two. God wanted a human family, specifically his own human family. And this is what he's going to get at the end. It's just it'll be magnified (and not just numerically, but qualitatively) exponentially over what we've experienced. But it'll be the logical outcome of what Eden was supposed to be. Eden was supposed to spread over the entire earth. And God will finally get his way.

So we're going to be doing these sorts of things collectively together. And as I said in the last Q&A episode, when the question about "what are we doing" comes up, we're going to be doing whatever we want. We're going to be doing what we want as citizens, as rulers, as owners, as full participants in God's world that he has created for us to enjoy and to care for and just... We're going to be

doing all that. We won't be limited by the embodiment we know. We won't be limited by any sin propensity in ourselves. We won't be limited by any external threats, either to us physically or spiritually. It will be life as it was intended to be lived from the beginning. And we will just enjoy it to the fullest. So again, that's how I'm approaching that. Because that's where Revelation at the end puts us, with these lines of demarcation finally fully dealt with and done away. And God left with his one human family that encompasses the entire earth. And we enjoy him and it together.

**TS:** Can't wait for the party, Mike. It's going to be great. [MH laughs] Alright, Alan says:

Trey, Mike, your podcast is a blessing. For years I was looking for biblical content outside of Sunday morning. I needed it during the week because I just figured that God has inspired men to write about more than just cherry-picked verses in the New Testament. Now four or five years later, I'm a Bible nerd, and sufficiently weird by modern Christian standards, and I'm very okay with that. [MH laughs] Also, Mike, your statement of "Just do your job" is the best summary of Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18 in modern vernacular. I thank God for people like y'all.

**MH:** Yeah, I note the air of unrepentance there and love it. [laughs]

**TS:** Absolutely.

**MH:** [laughs] I feel the same way, yeah.

**TS:** Jason says:

This podcast has given me an understanding of the Bible I never thought I could have. So very grateful.

Jim from Seattle asks:

8:30

**The book of Revelation outlines the ultimate destiny of mankind and the spiritual realm. How does Mike reconcile the fact that those such as Satan who oppose Christ in the spiritual realm can know how the story is supposed to end yet believe they have no way to alter the ending?**

**MH:** Well, Satan does know the outcome *now*. He didn't know certain things before. So right at the top here, let's not confuse the cryptic nature of messianic prophecy before the cross with post-resurrection understanding, when we get a lot more clarity and so do cosmic enemies. "Basically, we got duped." They know that. They know what awaits them. They know the destiny of the gods and so on

and so forth. Satan knows where all of this is headed. But he also knows that it's linked to the fullness of the Gentiles. We've talked about this a number of times on the podcast, even in the Revelation series, very recently, with the Revelation 19 and Revelation 20 episodes.

10:00 So Satan knows that his time is short, in that he's on a leash. He can't defeat God. He can't kill God. He knows he can't win. But that's not going to stop him from doing all he can to delay his own destiny and the destiny of cosmic powers with him. So since the return of Christ is linked to the fullness of the Gentiles, which is the fulfillment of the Great Commission, he's going to do whatever he can to distract the Church and delay that. It's a simple recipe. He can't alter the ultimate ending, but he can stall it. And he has, significantly. So that's the game plan. Again, he knows that ultimately there's going to come a day when God says, "We're done with this." But in Satan's mind, God has foolishly linked this to the Great Commission. "How foolish of God to do that." Of course, the reason why God does this is very consistent with Genesis 1—why God creates humanity. God could've created the world as he wanted it (perfect), but he doesn't. Only Eden approaches that sort of description. God could've transformed everything without the help of Adam and Eve, but he doesn't do that. He chooses to be in partnership with humans (his creation). This is why he made them like himself.

And so God is not going to give up on the plan. He's not going to change the plan. He's not going to change the rules, which would be a tacit admission that it was a bad idea to begin with. Omniscient beings like God don't have bad ideas. So God is stuck, if you will (but this is by God's own design) with humans as partners. He's not going to change the parameters. He's big enough that he doesn't need to do that. And so he *is* going to link the run full-circle of his will—the restoration of Eden, ultimately. He doesn't mind linking that to human partners, because that demonstrates not only that his commitment to humanity (which was from Genesis 1 all the way to the end of the Bible), but it also demonstrates his bigness or his power. He's going to win. Okay? And the cross was the lynchpin to this. It made the salvation plan irreversible. There's nothing Satan can do to reverse this now. "It's finished," as Jesus said on the cross. But what isn't finished yet is the consummation of the restoration of Eden. So Satan knows all these things, and he has the same kind of hindsight now that the apostles did. He was also blind to a lot of it like the apostles were before the cross, again, back to the cryptic nature of messianic prophecy that I talk about in *Unseen Realm*. But he knows all that. And he knows that it's going to have an end at some point. But he's going to kick the can down the road as often and as far as he can and keep at it. And that's what he does.

**TS:** Jared says:

By far the best resource I've ever found in my 35+ years as a born-again Christian. I especially love how we are informed, not indoctrinated. Truth shared in love, just as we are to share the good news. Eternal blessings to all of you.

Thank you.

**MH:** Yeah, that's well said.

**TS:** Daniel says:

I found Mike's work through Paleobabble in the early 2000s and then discovered the rest back when you announced you were restarting the podcast, starting with the Acts series. Love the work, the books, podcasts, and the content. Hope you feel better, Trey, and also our prayers are with you, Mike, and your family.

Thank you. Betsy has our next question:

13:20

**In the OT it is widely believed that when you die you don't go to heaven but rather to Sheol, where you waited in the hope of God's redemption. Is that not the correct view? So when Jesus was crucified, him setting the captives free is *not* the OT believing dead being released from Sheol to heaven, correct? So everyone who dies from Adam to today goes to Sheol, not heaven, correct? But somehow in Sheol believers are protected in a separate "compartment" by God, and we know we are with him but still in Sheol. Is this not what Enoch is describing when you see Abel, able to bring his suit before the council, or the souls that cry out?**

**MH:** I would say, some of these things are on target and some of them are not. It's true that the predominance... Now catch the way I'm saying this. We've actually addressed this in other podcasts and other Q&As. This is the Sheol question. But I'm going to bring up one specific episode here in a moment. But on the one hand, it's fair to say that the predominance of scripture-talk in the Old Testament when it comes to death and the afterlife is about Sheol—the grave—or the realm of the dead. But it's not the only talk. So it's not really clear, to make a blanket statement, that people in the Old Testament believed that when they died they were just going to go to Sheol.

15:00

Well, yeah, but the righteous had hope of being removed from Sheol. And there's never any timeline given. In other words, there's no time restriction here. For instance, we did an episode (#327) on the Psalms of Korah and the Afterlife. And it was based on David Mitchell's article. We didn't have him on at that point, but it was an article by him. And he went through some different psalms about the expression of the righteous who had this hope of being in God's presence. And again, there's no eschatological timetable that's removed from that. It's just an

expressed hope, that “I’m in Sheol, but I’m going to be taken away. I’m going to survive Sheol. The Lord is going to take me out of here and I’m going to be with the Lord.” So on and so forth.

So you have certain psalms that refer to this idea positively, where the psalmist expresses the hope that after he dies he’s going to be walking with the Lord, or with the Lord. Again, it doesn’t say, “with the Lord someday, thousands of years from now, when we’re all resurrected.” I mean, there’s no neat timeline like this. And it’s not even... A lot of this language isn’t specifically connected with talk of national resurrection or the end of days resurrection. It’s just there. It’s just general, without any commentary given to it. So it’s kind of true, but it’s not... It’s true except where it isn’t. So that’s the best way, I think, to answer that. There’s a predominance there, but you can’t really say that’s the full picture, and then sort of say everybody was thinking this. Because I don’t think that they were. If they knew these other psalms, they wouldn’t be thinking that, if they considered themselves as being in right relationship to the true God.

So taking that to some of these other parts of the question, the reference to Jesus setting captives free... If that is a reference (and I can’t tell from the question) to the “leading captivity captive” passage, that is not a reference to salvation. It actually is a reference to the conquest of evil powers. So it has nothing to do with salvation. It refers to the conquest of evil powers. Specifically, it hooks into Psalm 68. And I discuss that passage in *Unseen Realm* on pages 292-296, following Hall Harris there, who some may know as a professor at Dallas Seminary. I think he’s done the best work there.

So to bring that up to today, I think the New Testament is clear in the Epistles and I think the Epistles... There’s no reason to conclude that what Paul says when he says he expects to be with the Lord... “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” It doesn’t say, “To be absent from the body is to be present in a compartment in Sheol, where the Lord will show up from time to time.” The Lord doesn’t live in the realm of the dead. Okay? He can go there. You can’t escape him. But he doesn’t live there. It’s not his house, so to speak. You don’t open the door to the Lord’s house and enter Sheol. These are separate things. They’re polar opposites. One is the realm of life—everlasting life (think of Psalm 23 here); the other is the realm of death.

So I don’t think that description in the question is accurate. I think Paul is sufficiently and quite clear, that to be absent from the body for him meant to be present with the Lord. And for those of us who are in Christ, that’s where Christ is. Christ is not in Sheol. He rose from the dead. He is ascended to the right hand of the Father. This is where we see the Council and the reconstituted Council. And again, we talked about this in the book of Revelation, how believers today, when they die... This was actually just a few episodes ago. I can’t remember which one. But it’s toward the end of the book. Believers, when they die, are part

of this Council. The Council is not in Sheol. Okay? It just isn't. And God's house is not Sheol. It's not *in* Sheol, either. So I think these conceptions need some tweaking in terms of the way the question is asked. But broadly speaking in the Old Testament, the language is predominant there. But I think a fuller picture of the afterlife—destiny—develops through the Second Temple Jewish period and on into the New Testament. But the seeds for that expanded view actually come from the Old Testament—these psalms and such—that talk about the righteous being with the Lord.

20:00

**TS:** Well, Mike, I just wanted to comment on the Divine Council and... That's going to be a lot of believers on the Council. So to get a consensus is going to be rough. So I hope the majority vote... [MH laughs] You know, I don't know *how* that's going to go down. But that's a *lot* of people on the Council to get a consensus, so... I don't know how that works.

**MH:** Yeah. I think we'll have the mind of Christ, so we'll be okay.

**TS:** Okay.

**MH:** In other words, it's not going to be like the U.S. Congress. [laughs]

**TS:** Okay. Yeah, I was going to say, if there's something that needs to be voted on, it's going to be stuck in gridlock because you've got half the people want this; half want that. Yeah. I'm just a little worried about the Council.

**MH:** Or we could circumvent the constitutional process and get stuff voted on. I don't think we'll have to worry about that, either.

**TS:** Well, Daniel says:

The Naked Bible Podcast and *Unseen Realm* have changed the way I read and think about the Bible—how I read the Bible and how I apply what I have read from the Bible. Did I not include how much your work has enriched my personal faith. Yes, indeed. Thank you, Dr. Mike.

Lynn says:

I'm so grateful for these podcasts. I agree with what the others have commented. Mike's work has been like a rescue boat on a sea of misinformation and watered-down gospel. This is the only podcast I listen to regularly, and I hope Mike and Trey and the team behind them are both blessed and can continue in this extremely important work for the kingdom.

Thank you, Lynn.

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Alright, Paul from St. Louis, MO, wants to know:

21:05

**Once we return to the New Eden, I'm assuming that we and the members of elohim will continue to have free will. If that's the case, what's to prevent one of the elohim to rebel against God again or us humans to rebel again and get right back to where we started?**

**MH:** Yeah, I think I've answered this question in about six Q&As. So I'm going to do all I can to not answer it again. [laughs] No, we'll answer it here. But truth be told, I've answered this question many times. And I know we've had it in more than one Q&A. The short answer is, this is utterly implausible. Rebellion in the New Earth is utterly implausible to the extent of it being impossible. Now to try to illustrate that, my funny little way of illustrating this... How I answer this question is as follows: What's to prevent me (Mike, your host) from winning the Nobel Peace Prize, an Academy Award, and winning The Voice all in the same year? Let's just throw in the NFL MVP as well, in my free time. "Well, all those things are *possible*. They're *possible*, right, aren't they, Mike? It's *possible* that you could win the Nobel Peace Prize, and the Academy Award, and The Voice, and NFL MVP. I mean, there's no rule or cosmic rule that says you couldn't join the NFL or somehow cheat to make yourself a super athlete and go win that thing, right? It's *possible*." [sigh] No. Sorry. It's not. Okay? These are utter implausibilities that are absurd. And that's what we have here. In the new global Eden, we have reached the end point of our sanctification. We are glorified, as much like Jesus as we can *possibly* be without expanding the Trinity. The members of the Divine Council continue in their obedience. These are the faithful ones. Again, we are all together, of one mind, in one body. But again, there's only one Triune God. The rest of us are lesser. Okay? So we're not him. Yes, we still have free will when we're not him. "So isn't it possible that we could rebel?" Yeah, in the same way that it's possible for me to win the Nobel Peace Prize, the Academy Award, The Voice, and the NFL MVP, all in the same year. How about in the same way it's possible for any *one* of those things to happen to me? Yeah, it's possible. But it's so absurd. It's absurd to the point of impossibility in the utter implausibility. Possible and plausible are two different things. But even more than that (we can tack this on since we've been through Revelation now), recall that the New Jerusalem and New Earth are in some sense conflated in the book of Revelation; that is, the Old Testament expectation of the end combines these things. In Revelation the city and the New Earth are both described in Edenic language. So Eden stuff is sort of used to sketch out both the reality of the city (the New Jerusalem) and the New Earth. And that's important when you get to Revelation 21. I'm going to read verses 23-27 here:

**<sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup> By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day...**

So there's nothing on the outside that's a threat. Otherwise you would shut the gates.

25:00

**...and there will be no night there.**

So the bad nighttime, when the creepy crawly things come out — that's gone, too.

**<sup>26</sup>They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. <sup>27</sup>But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false,**

So there's your answer. Yeah, we've got free will. But we all have the mind of Christ, perfected as much as possible without expanding the Trinity. So the notion that we could sin and rebel (any of us who have gone through this perfection/sanctification process) is utterly implausible to the point of absurdity and impossibility.

**TS:** Todd says:

I feel like the scales have fallen from my eyes. I now see the spiritual realm and Heiser fortified my faith by finally explaining all the odd bits of the Bible with one narrative. In all seriousness, I had two specific questions my Bible professors were unable and frankly dismissive of to answer. Reading *I Dare You Not to Bore Me With The Bible* answered both. I will sing your praises for my years, and the wisdom of God you direct to people like me.

There you go.

**MH:** That's good. It's good to be useful.

**TS:** Jan says:

I've learned more from you about Scripture than I ever did in church on Sunday. You showed me there is a never-ending number of paths for continued study.

Boy, that's the truth. The more answers we get, Mike, the more questions we have.

**MH:** Yep. And I'll accept that. It makes me sad, the part about church, but we're trying to fix that. [laughs]

**TS:** Absolutely.

**MH:** Maybe the next generation can fix that a little bit better.

**TS:** They only have 400+ hours and counting of material.

**MH:** [laughs] Right.

**TS:** Alright, Dean has our next question about Revelation 20.

27:00

**Revelation 20 says death is destroyed as part of eschatological judgment. And in the new creation aren't we supposed to have "eternal life?" Yet Isaiah 65:20 seems to speak about the new creation yet refers to people being born, living full lives yet ultimately dying. What do you make of this?**

**MH:** I make of it that we should not over-literalize these descriptions in Isaiah. It's clear, based on Paul's lengthy discussion of the resurrection body, that we will all acquire in the New Earth and the New Eden a new embodiment, like that of the resurrected Jesus. And so we don't need to do things like eat and sleep and procreate, so on and so forth. We also will not die. Death is no more. You know? Yet Isaiah 65 has people planting vineyards and fields. I mean, why not ask why they're doing that? Because we don't need to eat, either. I would suggest that Isaiah 65 is doing its best to describe a perfect world. But its vision is still not at the level of what we get in Revelation's last couple chapters. I mean, let's just take a look at Isaiah 65. I'll start in verse 19:

**<sup>19</sup> I will rejoice in Jerusalem  
and be glad in my people;  
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping  
and the cry of distress.**

**<sup>20</sup> No more shall there be in it  
an infant who lives but a few days,  
or an old man who does not fill out his days,  
for the young man shall die a hundred years old,  
and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.**

We have sinners there, too. You know? The point is, Isaiah 65 is trying to describe a perfect world. It's a world where we won't cry anymore. And Revelation picks up on this. It's a world where we don't have disease. We don't have death. Okay? It's going to be perfect. And Isaiah is trying to express it. We're not going to have infants who only live a few days. In other words, he picks out a circumstance that's tragic and says, "This circumstance will not be present in the new world." He's not pulling out this example to teach us something about specific lifespans of infants. The point is that you're not going to have to worry about this tragedy. You're not going to have to worry about men who, okay, they

live more than a few days, but they don't live as long as they should have. You're not going to have to worry about that anymore. A young man, in this world, would be someone who would die at 100. And 100, of course, is a milestone mark. Again, the point is not to give us an ontology of the occupants of the new heaven and New Earth. Again, we're not reading it overly literalistically. The point is to describe a perfect set of circumstances. And when he says, "The young man shall die 100 years old, and the sinner 100 years old shall be accursed," it means everything's going to be the way it's supposed to be. Okay? Sinners aren't going to be rewarded. They're not even going to *be* there when you get to the book of Revelation, because it places this post-judgment (the judgment of evil on sinners). You know, in our world today, we know that the wicked get ahead. They do benefit from evil. And what Isaiah's trying to say here in Isaiah 65 is that's not going to be part of the New Earth. The unjust are not going to be rewarded or apparently rewarded. They're not going to benefit. And on the other side, you get somebody righteous who dies prematurely. These sets of circumstances are going to have no place in the New Earth.

**<sup>21</sup> They shall build houses and inhabit them;**

Again, in our new bodies, why do we even need houses if we can pass through solid objects? If we can be anywhere when we just think about it? I mean, think about the body that Jesus had at the resurrection. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, this is what we're going to be. We don't need houses.

**... they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.**

Why? Well, I guess we can if we want, but we don't have to.

**<sup>22</sup> They shall not build and another inhabit [MH: they won't be displaced];  
they shall not plant and another eat;**

Again, these are circumstances of life as the writer of Isaiah knew it, that you go through all this toil and trouble and you don't get to enjoy it, because you die. That's not going to be a circumstance that we have to contend with anymore. And he just keeps going through it.

**<sup>23</sup> They shall not labor in vain  
or bear children for calamity [MH: which cuts both ways, either rebellious  
kids or things that happen to your kids],  
for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD,  
and their descendants with them.**

Again, this is what I think's going on in Isaiah. Isaiah is doing his best to describe a perfect world, but its vision is still not at the level of what we get in Revelation in the last couple chapters. We shouldn't bind or restrict Revelation's vision with the literalness or a literalistic reading of Isaiah 65. The former (Revelation's picture) transcends the latter (Isaiah's picture), possibly because the full, final resurrection in terms of our own bodies and life is the context for John, but it wasn't really the context for Isaiah. John might have (through revelation and experience with the risen Christ) more of a context—more of a perspective—than Isaiah did to write about this. And since he's shown things in the book of Revelation (I mean, this is visionary literature), I think it's pretty safe to say that he does. He can add things. He has a better, more perfect view of what this is going to be like. So Isaiah may not have envisioned all these circumstances that John had, and so his description is different than what John's is. But we shouldn't let Isaiah's limitations here or his lesser context dictate what we read in the book of Revelation.

**TS:** Tiago says:

Naked Bible Podcast has been a game-changer in allowing for clear and unparalleled understanding of the Bible. Thank you, Mike and Trey, for your hard work and dedication. All the best from your listener in Brazil.

Thank you, Tiago.

**MH:** Mm hmm.

**TS:** Peggy says:

I love your podcast. I listen to it each week. It has certainly strengthened my understanding of the Bible and has been such a blessing in my life. I am continuing to pray for you. Congratulations on the 400<sup>th</sup> episode!

Thank you, Peggy. Max asks:

33:55

**You referenced Beale's commentary on Revelation throughout the series. Could please you give some positive and negative feedback on it?**

**MH:** Yeah, I don't think there's anything like Beale. I'll grant, Aune's commentary is in three volumes. But I don't think there's anything quite like Beale (and that's over 1000 pages) for ferreting out Second Temple Jewish literature that is relevant to understanding the book of Revelation or its emphasis on the Old Testament. Now Aune does a lot of that. But I think that Beale does surpass it. So that's why it would be my go-to resource—because it heavily engages Second Temple [audio breaks up]... It is the most immediate context for what

35:00

John is writing about and writers in the Second Temple period are trying to interpret the Old Testament for us. They consider it the Word of God. They're trying to help us think about the Hebrew Bible. And so those writers... And all of this precedes the Rabbinic stuff by centuries, okay? *This* is the context for the New Testament, not the later Rabbinic material. And so Beale's commentary I think, goes the farthest in collecting all that stuff in one place.

Now negatively, there would be some that think Beale is excessively wordy in doing this. He does tend to repeat himself, but I think that's due to the structure of the commentary. If you had the commentary and looked at how he arranges the material, you would see why it would kind of lend itself to being repetitive in a number of places. So you know, if that would irritate you, it's going to catch your eye, I can almost guarantee it. But I can sort of look past that and get to the nuts-and-bolts stuff that he's doing. And plus, he engages the Greek New Testament. He engages the Greek text. And others do as well, but to me what separates Beale is just the amount of material from the Second Temple period that finds its way into his treatment of Revelation.

**TS:** Ryan says:

My small group has noticed my understanding and enthusiasm for the newfound richness and *Matrix*-like qualities of what the text actually says. One of our pastors in our group has started saying, "Ryan probably knows more about that than me. Ask him." [laughter] Everyone is still lukewarm about the full-fledged spiritual reality the authors wrote about, even though it jumps off almost every page.

So there you go.

**MH:** Yeah.

**TS:** I'd probably be like that, too, Mike. "Just ask Trey. He knows that stuff."

**MH:** There you go.

**TS:** I like that. I like that our listeners... You know, you've got to get your pastors listening to the podcast, you know?

**MH:** Right. It's part of the plan for world domination, so there you go.

**TS:** There you go, absolutely. *Pinkie and the Brain*. That should be our new... [MH laughs] Do you know who *Pinkie and the Brain* is—the cartoon? Do you know what that is?

**MH:** Yeah. I've enjoyed it, yeah.

**TS:** Yeah, that's perfect. I love that. Alright, Carol says:

My favorite podcast to listen to! I feel so blessed to have found Dr. Heiser and all of his lectures and videos. This has made such an impact in my life and faith in our Lord Jesus. Thank you. Many prayers and blessings for Mike and Trey.

Thank you, Carol.

Alright, Jason from Portland, OR, asks:

37:30

**As you go through Revelation, I see the links with the Old Testament and can't help but think about how some have said there is a cycle that is repeating. Are we in a cycle? Is that just my dispensationalist past coming back to haunt me? [MH laughs]**

**Given our current situation geopolitically and the dispensationalist connections with a mark, transhumanism, and one world government where or how does taking current world happenings into account fit in with our Bible reading? If at all?**

**MH:** Well, this kind of thing is not exclusive to dispensational thinking, although I think it's fair to say it's predominant. But on the other side of that, you're going to have a lot of people who approach Revelation dispensationally, or as futurists, who are not going to link it to stuff in the newspaper (like transhumanism or other things we see, U.S. military black helicopters and all that stuff). So there are plenty of dispensationalists who aren't going to go down that road as well.

So having said that, I would say there are a number of problems with it. I would say reading any part of the Bible and doing hermeneutics or exegesis using the newspaper is a bad idea. It's deeply flawed. And that includes Revelation. It includes all of it. That's just not... [sigh] It defies the communication enterprise. The biblical writers are writing to a specific audience. It wasn't us. Okay? And as soon as we say it was us, as soon as a futurist approach says Revelation should be interpreted with the newspaper in hand, what they're saying is that what it describes could not have been fulfilled at any other time. So I don't want to hear about your talk about an imminent rapture anymore, because what you're saying is that the rapture you believe in really wasn't imminent. It could only happen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Now if you get people to think about the implications of some of the statements they make, they might be less inclined to make those statements. Because that is what you're saying. If we're *supposed to*... Now catch the way I'm saying this. If we're *supposed to* look at our newspaper (or the internet) and our current events and use that as a guide to understanding the book of Revelation, that is an admission—it is a statement—that the book of Revelation (its content) could

40:00

not have been fulfilled at any other time. It's supposed to be being fulfilled today. Which means it couldn't have been fulfilled in some other era. That is deeply flawed.

So out of the gate, you have that problem. It's a very inconsistent futuristic hermeneutic. For example, let's go back to Jesus. Jesus understood the Antiochus typology for antichrist. Because you know, the book of Daniel uses this in the references, Antiochus IV, the madman. Okay, Jesus understands that. But he says the antichrist was yet future to his own time. So does that mean 70 A.D.? Does it mean Nero? Well, I don't find... This is me talking personally now. Since I don't find the Nero 666/616 material persuasive... I don't buy that at all. You say, "Why don't you find it persuasive?" Because you have to cheat on the spellings. You have to spell Nero in different ways and you have to include "Caesar" in some of the spellings to get these numbers. Look, there's only one number in the original inspiration of Revelation 13. Most manuscripts have it at 666. So it's not going to be both. When John originally wrote this, it's going to be one or the other. So the fact that you can account for both using Nero or Nero Caesar, and it's spelled differently in Latin, Aramaic, and Greek, and you can get hits depending on which language you pick for which combination, that's cheating. That's why I'm not impressed by it. You've got to pick one.

That's the first thing. And then you've got all these other problems to deal with. Why can't we just go with Nero? Why can't we just go with Nero Caesar? Why can't we just pick one language? "Because the system doesn't work then, Mike!" That's my point precisely. So since I'm not impressed with that, that's one problem I have with limiting Jesus' reference to the antichrist being future. I don't think it should be limited to 70 A.D. because of Nero, okay? So I've got problems there.

I could also ask, "Well, where's the cycle or the pattern?" We forget... When we ask about patterns with antichrist, what we mean is that, "Well, I see this pattern of a great end times enemy showing up, who is an enemy of the messiah. And he's going to demand allegiance and obedience. He's a tyrant." Okay. But do you realize in the biblical picture... The biblical picture is concerned with more than just the appearance of a tyrant. There are other things that happen to the tyrant that didn't happen to Antiochus or to Nero. There are other events, such as the demise of the beast being accompanied by the return of Christ, that didn't happen with Nero or, of course, Antiochus before him. Or anybody else to this point. So these "patterns" are excluding certain things that if it was a real pattern should be included. Antichrist himself as a theme or an entity—a person, a topic of biblical theology—there are certain elements that compose the mosaic to the portrait of the antichrist and his times and what he does. It's not just that he exists. That's not the pattern. The pattern is the fuller picture. And the fuller picture has not repeated.



So even the presumption of being in a cycle or a pattern requires some rethinking here. Because it's a bigger matrix that you have to build, rather than just the existence of this person. So I don't really think patterning is the best way to express the similarities. Because they're incomplete. People don't really use the full picture. We can't explain why things haven't played out according to XYZ pattern. We just don't know. We just know that it didn't. This pattern (if we want to actually create a mosaic—a matrix of ideas that surround the great eschatological enemy that we know as Christians as the antichrist)... If we're going to create all the elements to the pattern and try to be consistent with it, we don't have any matches. Okay? Antiochus wasn't it. Nero wasn't it. Well, who's going to be it? Well, that would still be yet future, and that's about all that you can really say.

45:00

So this is why, since we were already at the end of what we can coherently say, I think it's a waste of time trying to figure this sort of stuff out. Remember my blog series "Why an obsession with eschatology is a waste of time"? And this is part of it. The text is too broad in certain respects and too precise in other respects to allow us to claim certainty, so why bother? It doesn't matter if we get surprised by how it plays out. "Oh, I want to know, Mike! I want to know so I'm ready." Okay, you should be living as though you're ready that it could happen in the next ten minutes, without you even knowing it, without you even sniffing it out. Why does knowing it in hindsight... Why is that the motivation for you to be living the way the Lord wants you to live? You should be living that way regardless. It doesn't matter if you get surprised. Why? Because we should be following Jesus anyway. So I don't see at all how current science, current military technology, has anything to do with the mark and what we see in Revelation when we have other thing, like "taking the name" is demonstrably non-literalist in biblical thought. Again, it has to do with who you align your allegiance to, again because of the "bearing the name" idea in the Old Testament. I would think, at the very least, we should look at the Old Testament for what "bearing the name" means, as a guide to interpreting bearing the name of the beast. Why? Because basically John uses the Old Testament on every blasted page of this thing.

Here's another question. We in the West are also nowhere near the tyranny of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. We think we are because of Covid crackdowns and the abuse of governmental power as we've known it in the West—the decline and perhaps impending death of democracy. Okay, we're thinking that this is tyranny. We are nowhere near the 1<sup>st</sup> century. We're nowhere near places in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that are not in the West. Why is it that we're interpreting the Bible through Western (i.e., American) experience? Why? It wasn't written to Americans. It was written to somebody else, in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century. It's written *for* our benefit, but not *to* us. By definition, to interpret the book of Revelation in light of 21<sup>st</sup> century American military technology and 21<sup>st</sup> century American political problems and abuses, that's not a sound hermeneutic, as a method. Now that doesn't stop the idea that it could happen today. It certainly could. You could see how it could play out. But

we can't use this suspicion, or this... I'm not going to call it a hope. I don't think any of us are hoping to go through this. But if it leads to the second coming, okay, maybe it *is* a hope, you know? But nobody's out there really waving the flag for persecution, just to have the end come. Usually people who ask these kinds of questions want to escape. They define "being ready" by either missing out on persecution through a particular view of the rapture, or they think they can somehow get through the tribulation better if they know ahead of time who the antichrist is. Well, again, both of those things I think just need better thinking.

So in the West... I mean, in the First century, the Romans are doing things to Christians like going into their houses and their house churches and taking the kids away from parents and selling them into sex trade and slavery. Okay, we are nowhere near that. And sure, the government is doing stuff to harm the family. Absolutely. And in the third world, some of these places have been under tyranny for a long time. Are they interpreting the book of Revelation the way Americans do? [laughs] Or are they doing something different with it? You know, the U.S. is not the new Israel, folks. The Western culture is not a new Israel. So our Western perspective of world events can't serve as a sure guide to reading the book of Revelation. Why is it better than Christians in communist China who are under persecution? Chances are they'd probably get more out of the book, because they're already suffering in ways that are despicable. They could probably relate to it more. And if they can, they would look at things perhaps a bit differently than we do in the West.

50:00

That's my only point here, that the way we think today in one particular part of the world, in one particular set of geopolitical circumstances... Why would we assume that that is the hermeneutical guide for a book that was given to everyone in every culture? Again, these are the sorts of things we need to examine, when we start thinking about Revelation these ways. I have to do it, too. I mean, I have to keep my mind in check and oriented. I have to keep my thoughts in line with the text. It's about the text. It's not about what I suspect. It's not about what I think I see. Because at the end of the day, I don't really see... I'm not a seer. I don't have any special insight in terms of inspiration. The Lord's not whispering in my ear what's going to happen in the book of Revelation, okay? If I wanted to start a cult or some movement or something, I could present myself that way. But it ain't going to happen. It's nonsense. Let's just be honest and say we're not consistent with the patterning as we think about it. We're not consistent in the approach. And at the end of the day, how would we know, anyway? How would we know, anyway, since this was not written to us at this time and to us specifically in the West? It was written to an audience that is long gone, but it's still relevant for us today, especially since we're still looking ahead, futuristically, to something. We're still looking ahead here, at least I am. Because again, I'm not persuaded by any of the attempts to identify antichrist with either a modern or an ancient person. I don't find them at all persuasive. They leave too many things out. They cheat too often. When you cheat, I'm not impressed. You've lost me.

And that's just what happens here. So let's just set it aside and try to learn as much as we can about what John is describing. And the way to do that is what we've tried to do in this series. Let's use the Old Testament. John uses it everywhere. So let's try to get a clue and look at what he's doing with the Old Testament. And it'll get us a little further down the road into sorting out the weird stuff that's in this book. It's not going to provide an answer to every question, for sure. But it gives us a better framework for thinking. And it gives us some insight that John would've intended his original audience to have.

**TS:** Robert comments:

For me, the Naked Bible Podcast is a haven of theological sanity, a refuge from, as Dr. Heiser terms it, "Christian Middle Earth." On second thought, maybe it should be Christian Mordor, would be more accurate [laughter], at least the circles I've traveled. One does not simply question the catechism and doctrinal statement or the oracle behind the pulpit without the black gates opening and hordes of theological orcs pouring out. [MH laughs] [MH: that's great] [TS laughs]

I greatly appreciate the effort that goes into the podcast. I've benefited tremendously from it, and I've passed the fruits along to others to share as well. Thanks very much.

You like that?

**MH:** It took me back to Halloween actually. We talked about that last episode. I'm handing out my *Stranger Things* books, you know? A couple of times, there I am as Gandalf, with the sword and the staff. And I'm standing over some little kid and saying things like, "Are there any orcs among you? We don't serve orcs here. We put them to the sword." [laughter]

**TS:** That's perfect.

**MH:** Yeah, we got a little carried away with it. But you know. [laughs] "No orcs. You're good." [laughs]

**TS:** Alright, Robert says:

I started late February 2021 listening to the podcast. I just finished listening to *all* of the episodes. I also downloaded the *Unseen Realm* and listened to it twice. I drive a lot and love to listen to Mike, so I almost listen every day. Thank you, Mike and Trey. My walk with the Lord has grown because of your work.

Our next question is from Dimitar from Bulgaria, about Revelation 17:

54:00

**If according to Mike's interpretation, the prostitute called Babylon (Rev.17:3) is Rome, then logically Rome is not only the Prostitute, but also the seven headed beast which the Prostitute sits upon (Rev.17:3). Then we are to understand both images—Prostitute and a Beast, as one entity—Rome? In that case how are we to interpret the fact that the Beast will turn against the Prostitute, it will hate her, desolate her, eat her flesh and burn her with fire (Rev.17:16)? Can Rome hate Rome, eat its own flesh or burn itself with fire?**

55:00

**MH:** Well, let's go back to the metaphors: prostitute and beast. I'll ask the question: "Did they both apply to Babylon?" Well, yeah, because that's the source material for both. So we have one image that's more direct. You get the "city" image, the seven hills, where you find the harlot in Revelation. Again, it's an obvious description of Babylon with the waters and so on and so forth. And you get the beast in Daniel 7. So yeah, that one's obvious. The other one's more conceptual: chaos symbols. So if John wants to use both angles (both sets of metaphors, both descriptions) in correlating Babylon to whom both apply, and he wants to use that to correlate Babylon with Rome, he can do that. He can take one system of communicating that in the Old Testament and applying it to Rome. I mean, he also borrows things from Egypt as well. You could say, "Well, Egypt's not Rome. Egypt wasn't Babylon." Well, you're missing the point. The point is that at different points in biblical history, you had an arch-villain—arch-agent of chaos. At one point it was Egypt, then it became Babylon, and now it's Rome. And so all of the variegated pictures that are used for any *one* of these empires—any one of these arch-villains—can apply to the current one that John is living under, which is Rome.

Now the question, "Can Rome hate Rome," and so on and so forth, well that certainly happened with Rome. Rome rotted from within and became its own worst enemy. Okay? It imploded over the course of a century or two before it was ever taken by the Vandals and Goths and all this. It rotted from within. It destroyed itself. You could also say that this makes sense in Revelation because if you read that alongside the insanity of Satan (who's directing the beast—Satan directing the beast against Zion), that is an act of pure self-destruction. Okay? How could Satan possibly think he could stop God's plan post-resurrection? How could he possibly think he could take Zion from God? How could he possibly think he could defeat—kill off—the Most High? He knows he can't do this, but he does it anyway. Again, this is an act of desperation and self-destruction. So yeah. Yeah, that can happen. Even though it means certain defeat, this is the course of action that's taken out of desperation, and really to be honest with you, out of hatred for God and his people.

So I'm not troubled by the mixing of the metaphors here in combination to describe Rome because of the way these things play out in both the Old and the New Testament. I think on one level it makes sense that John would do this. On another level, it's odd to us, unless we're thinking collectively about the series of metaphors and how to read certain events in light of that collectivity.

**TS:** David says:

Thank you for being intellectually open, rigorous, and honest in a way so very, very few in the pulpit and seminary are. This show has been a lifeline to help me keep engaging with my faith and replenishing the reserves needed to stay active in my local congregation.

And Brandon says:

Every show makes me want to go to a rave and pour chocolate syrup over my head. [laughter] Just kidding. Love you guys. Love your mission. God bless you both and yours.

Brandon, yeah, I hear you. Sometimes these episodes, Mike, get a little... Get in the weeds. And I'm sure people want to pour chocolate on their heads.

**MH:** I was going to say, is that time for the chocolate syrup, then?

**TS:** [laughs] Yeah.

**MH:** Okay. I'll have to remember that.

**TS:** Alright, Nick from South Texas. His question is about Revelation 9 and the opening of the bottomless pit.

58:55

**In episode 377, Dr. Heiser says he believes that Revelation 9 describes the release of the Watchers. Does Dr. Heiser believe this is before Christ's return? Can Dr. Heiser please offer some clarity as to the timing of the release of the imprisoned Watchers?**

1:00:00

**MH:** Yeah, it certainly is before the return of Christ in the book of Revelation. I don't see anything that would situate it afterwards. It's part of the recapitulation cycles that lead up to the confrontation over Zion in both human and supernatural evil terms. So yeah, I would put it before the second coming. I can't help wondering if this is not prompted in some respect by... I've said other things in Q&A, for instance, about Matthew 24—that Matthew 24 is not about a return of the Nephilim in conjunction with the second coming, because I don't believe that it is for a number of reasons, the most fundamental of which are two. One is that Matthew never quotes the Septuagint of Genesis 6. He doesn't use any of the

unique vocabulary there for marrying and giving in marriage. He actually uses different Greek words. So if he wanted us to think of Genesis 6 in the Septuagint, he would have used the vocabulary, but he doesn't. And the other thing is, the marrying and giving in marriage in Matthew 24 is selective. In other words, there are other characteristics about the people that are mentioned there that do not show up in Genesis 6, so why should we interpret Matthew 24 ostensibly in line with the one of three things that does appear in Genesis 6 and leave the other two go, that don't appear in Genesis 6? It's a very inconsistent method. So I don't think at all that we have a return of the Nephilim in conjunction with the second coming, or preceding it.

And we also have to remember that the Watchers who are imprisoned are not the Nephilim. Okay? These are two different things. The Watchers that are in prison are the guilty sons of God from Genesis 6. The Nephilim are their spawn that get killed off in the rest of the biblical storyline. These are two different things. So they have nothing to do with Matthew 24 in any respect.

So I see all sorts of disconnects here. I see no coherent picture exegetically emerging from this. I do think that Revelation 9 is about the release of the Watchers because basically, cosmic evil is allowed its last shot. And honestly, I think God is actually using the release to seduce cosmic evil into the insane decision to try to take Zion. Because that is where it's all going to end. I think they get baited by their own... God uses their own ego—their own hatred of him and his people. And he releases them all, ultimately to their own self-destruction. So that's how I see this as playing out.

Other people might wonder about my fiction as well. Fiction is fiction. Fiction is not biblical exposition, even though I will admit I sprinkle a lot of biblical theology in my novels. I do that deliberately. But the novels give me a place to play, where I'm not restricted by exegetical data. [laughs] When I do biblical interpretation, we're restricted by exegetical data. When you write fiction, you're free to marry things that the Scripture text never marries and read things into a passage that the Scripture never reads into a particular passage. So it's fun. It's creative. It gets people into... [audio breaks up]. Fiction is fiction, and fiction is not biblical exposition.

**TS:** And can we get an update on the third novel, please?

**MH:** Well, it's like everything else. It's slowed because of the cancer. So... I'm not giving up on it. Just trust me. I'm not giving up on it. I want the third one to be out there. I'm into it and liking it. But it's just slowed down like everything else.

**TS:** Alright. Kathryn says:

Thank you for being there and making the Bible more understandable for me and for the world. My faith has been renewed since the fateful day I stumbled upon your work, Dr. Mike and Trey.

Awesome. And then Larkin says:

I've learned so much by listening to the podcast. Thank you for what you do.

Alright. Our last question is from Doug in Michigan. And he starts off by saying:

Love you guys.

We love you too, Doug.

**MH:** Yes, thank you.

**TS:** And he wants to know:

1:03:45

**Would Ezekiel 9:4 have any application to Revelation 13:17 in relationship to the “mark”?**

1:05:00

**MH:** Yeah, this is going to be mercifully short. Back in the episode where we talk about the mark, I do allude to this. And I think I probably allude to it through Beale or some other source, about Ezekiel 9. So the marking imagery does come from Ezekiel 9. And we also get it... I think it's fair to say this. We discussed it as well with the 144,000. These two things sort of play off each other—that both sides are marked, so to speak. And again, I think Ezekiel 9 is part of the picture on both sides in terms of the object lesson. You have the elect that are marked and preserved and you have the enemies of the elect—the enemies of the Christ—who are marked, so to speak, in Revelation 13. So these two things are sort of set as being mirror opposites. And that makes sense because if the marking, though we have this visualization going on in the book of Ezekiel... And by the way, when the people who are the targets of Ezekiel 9 (the wicked in Jerusalem), when they are punished, when they are destroyed and killed, that wasn't preceded by a literal couple of angels or guys in robes going through marking people literally. It's a way of communicating the idea that the Lord knows those who are his, and he will protect them. They're not going to suffer the same fate as the wicked. And that might mean salvation in a physical sense in real time. It also might mean salvation in an eternal sense, in the afterlife. But the Lord knows those who are his, and he's going to separate them out, and he's going to protect his own. They are not going to share the same fate. And so we shouldn't be literalizing the mark here in the book of Revelation on either side (either with the 144,000 or with those who take the mark of the beast). It's just, again, a way of describing with an Old Testament object lesson here those who are aligned either with the true God—with Jesus—or against him. And the Lord

knows those who are his and those who are not. So he knows these things. And the righteous will not suffer the same fate as the unrighteous. So I think that's what's behind it. And Ezekiel 9 has a role to play there.

**TS:** Alright, our last two comments. Christy says:

I am a pastor who is greatly encouraged by your podcasts, the books, and FringePop. And I'm praying for cancer to leave your body, and that you will be strengthened to continue to impart great truths to the body of Christ. Thank you.

**MH:** Thank you.

**TS:** And Brent says:

Succinctly put, the Naked Bible Podcast is one of the most important podcasts in all of Christianity. Biblically, historically, hermeneutics, the unknown realm, are concisely taught. All of the strange, super-weird things in Scripture have been made reasonably clear. Thank you my bros for all that. The more Fantasy Football, the better. [laughter] [MH: sweet]

P.S. I listen to you at one and a half times speed, so y'all sound really smart and super witty.

Well, guess what, Brent? We are. [laughter]

**MH:** We are? [laughs] Yeah, we have our moments.

**TS:** We are. Alright, Mike. Well more Fantasy Football talk! You heard it. The more, the better. So I guess we've got listener confirmation.

**MH:** The public has spoken.

**TS:** Absolutely.

**MH:** Yep. The public has spoken.

**TS:** Alright, Mike. Well, that's all the questions we have this time. Be looking for Part 3 next time. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.