

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 403

Revelation Q&A, Part 3

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Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions about Revelation:

- You say angels don't have wings, but do we know they can't? [Time stamp 4:05]
- Please explain the Greek word toxon (bow). [9:00]
- Is the phrase "eternal death" defensible from scripture? [15:25]
- Does the angel standing on the water connect to Yahweh hovering over the water in the creation narrative, and does the rainbow over the angel's head connect, as well? [24:40]
- Was John writing for a Hellenistic Jewish audience or a pagan audience? [34:15]
- Does Revelation 9 connect to the Scorpion Apkallu in Gigamesh? [44:25]

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 403: Revelation Q&A, Part 4. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

MH: Well, still doing well. And I can say that because we're just doing what we have to do here. We're kind of in a routine now. I mean, I thrive on routine normally. But when you're thrown into this set of circumstances, it helps to have a routine. Otherwise you just sort of sit around, I don't know, watch The Voice or something. [laughs]

TS: Is that what y'all watch?

MH: No. No, no, no.

TS: Do you all have a TV show? Is there a Heiser TV show?

MH: My wife asked me the other day if I was depressed or if I was giving up. Because I'm watching more TV. See, I don't watch TV. But now I'm at home. And

so sometimes I'm not mentally alert enough because of medication to do anything productive. So I'll watch TV. You know? You just go on auto-pilot.

TS: Yeah, those alpha brain waves.

MH: Yeah. But she's interpreting this as a surrender. [laughter] "What's happening to you?! You're watching TV all of a sudden!"

TS: Are you just watching random stuff, or do you have something you're actually watching?

MH: When I turn it on, I'll look for National Geographic. I like the *Life Below Zero* shows. But if those aren't on, it's like, I'm just kind of stuck. Because I'm surely not watching Ancient Aliens. [TS laughs] Science Channel once in a while will have something good on. Yeah. I'm not doing the British Baking shows and The Voice. I'd need an intervention then. I'd need to have somebody come and rescue me. [laughs]

TS: Yeah, I love TV. You've got to just go veg out and get those alpha waves going every now and then. It's good to unwind.

MH: It's disturbed my wife. [laughter]

TS: Yeah, that would be disturbing. All of a sudden, now you're just a couch potato.

MH: Yeah, it's so out of character, you know? Because my weeks are 60-70 hours of working on something. I'm *always* working on something, you know? But this has slowed me down. I'm about 50% productivity, which means I'm getting a good 30-40 hours of something in. But the fact that I'm not always engaged, that I've actually become passive and watching TV, it's disturbed my wife a little bit. [laughs]

TS: It's probably good for you to slow down a little bit. You need a little break. Enjoy it while you can. Because I'm sure once you're full strength, you're going to go right back.

MH: Yeah, I just thought it was funny. Like, "No, we're okay here. It's just..." [laughs] "I'm sorry I can't be on the offensive all the time anymore."

TS: Alright, well, let's put you to work here at least on this, some questions here, Mike.

MH: Yeah, really.

TS: We still have a few more comments left over from our 400th celebration. We're going to keep the party going here. And it's from the Terry family in Brazil, Indiana. They say:

We are Heiserites. Been listening to you guys' show religiously for the last 3 ½ years.

We appreciate that from the Terry family.

MH: Wow, there's some dedication. Thank you.

TS: Alright, Alan has our first question.

4:05 **Dr. Heiser insists that angels don't have wings. Since angels are spiritual beings, are they limited in form? In the Bible they sometimes are represented as men or even stars. Why couldn't they have wings? Philo of Alexandria says the Greek god Mercury had wings on his ankles because he was a swift messenger from the gods. Couldn't the angels of Revelation be seen as messengers from God?**

5:00 **MH:** Well, with all due respect to Philo, I don't really care what Philo says about the god Mercury. [laughs] You know, the fact that they're spiritual beings means they don't have *any* form that we would recognize. If you're a spiritual being, you're by definition—by nature—disembodied, or at least you don't have embodiment like we are familiar with it. So all of these descriptions are really about designating attributes or point of origin. The fact that angels *descend* tells you that they're from heaven. Heaven is “up there,” even though we know theologically that heaven doesn't have spatiality. It doesn't have latitude and longitude. Okay? It's not a contained physical space in any sense. But yet we have to use language—the language of spatiality—to even talk about it. And it's the same thing for the beings that inhabit the spiritual world. They have some sort of embodiment because they're visible to the eye. They are written as though they appear in certain ways. But we have to remember that all of this... It's not like an ontological description of an angel. And you know, I'm not willing to make up details that aren't in the Bible. The fact is, the Bible never describes angels as having wings. Period. So I'm not going to add to it.

Rather than saying, “I insist that angels don't have wings,” let's go with the correct statement that says, “Scripture doesn't ever describe them with wings. And so we shouldn't conclude that they do have wings.” And again, even these passages that have “ascending and descending” will lack the wings description. It has the ascent and the descent, but it's just designed to tell us where a being comes from (in this case, heaven), to earth. It doesn't say that any wings were flapping. They could just be floating, for all we know, or just descending. And it's

the same language used of the second coming. I doubt when Jesus comes back that he grew wings in order to descend. And the same thing for us, when we ascend to the spiritual world. Again, it just means we leave our earthly plain and we go up there. We go up there where God lives—the heavens, the heavenly place, the heavenly realm. You know, we're not growing wings to do that, either. These are metaphors that try to get us to at least be able to conceptualize beings who are not like us in some pretty fundamental ways, by using language that's familiar to us. It's not an easy task. It's a very difficult task, and this is how the biblical writers accomplish it.

Now when we do have supernatural beings interact with people in biblical stories (like the Angel of the Lord), you don't see the Angel of the Lord ever described with wings. You don't see an angel ever described with wings when they interact with people. Rather, they look like men. For me, the best instance of this is the incident at Sodom and Gomorrah with Lot. If they had wings, Lot would have noticed that. You know? But he describes them as men because that's what they look like. Now when they do something that men can't do, like strike the city blind, well then he kind of knows, "These aren't normal guys." And the text will call them angels in Genesis 19. But I'm just not willing to add details where they're not part of the text of Scripture. It's as simple as that. I don't have any big... I'm not a special interest group, opposed to wings or anything. I am opposed to added details that aren't there and pretending they are. It's not part of the picture.

TS: Bill has a question about Revelation 6:2, and it reads in the ESV:

And I looked, and behold, a white horse. And its rider had a bow. And a crown was given to him. And he came out conquering and to conquer.

So Bill's question is about the word "bow."

9:00

I do not remember a single commentary reference to this bow being anything but a weapon of war. And it is common to also mention that this rider lacks arrows for this bow. But the Blue Letter Bible says that this is that word, and it means *toxon*, from the base of G5088, "a bow, apparently as simple as fabric. Bow." I have looked for simple fabric bows from the time of Jesus and have not been able to find anything that flips my switch. I would appreciate any light you could shed on the word *toxon* = bow.

MH: Sure. Yeah. Again, Revelation 6:2. I don't think we need to read it again. But we have a rider with a bow. And there is no mention of the arrows. We'll get back to that in a moment. But the Greek word is *toxon*. You could look that up in BDAG or some other standard lexicon. It's an archer's weapon. But that's all you're going to find in the simple lexicons, which isn't terribly helpful. What I

10:00

recommend is that any book... There are a number of these, of both reference books and individual books. Believe it or not, any book on Greco-Roman or Second Temple military gear or warfare would include discussions and descriptions of the *toxon*. So if you Google, for instance, the words “archery” “ancient” “Greece” (but I recommend using Google Scholar for that search), you’re actually going to find some free studies on Greco-Roman (Greek) archery—their weapons of warfare. And you’ll get into these full descriptions of what the particular weapon was, what it was made of, how it was used, who used it, so on and so forth.

Now some scholars, interestingly enough, if you do that you’ll find that there is something of a disagreement about the word itself (*toxon*). Some think that it’s not a native Greek word. Some think it’s a lone word from Scythian. And so you will find studies of painted pottery (this familiar sort of Greek pottery) that will talk about the warriors in the pottery actually being Scythians or modeled after Scythians, and part of that discussion is the bow that is depicted. So this is what’s behind this notion that maybe *toxon* is a word brought in to Greek from the outside through specifically these archers from Scythia. Who knows? I mean, you can evaluate that all you want. But I would recommend running that search.

I’ll give you one sentence here of the kind of things that you’re going to run into or at least that you can find that will give you free access. I just mentioned the Scythian archers. If you run the search, you’ll find an article that’s called *Scythian Archers in Ancient Attic Vase Painting*. And it’ll talk about the *toxon*. You’ll find another one called “The Ephebeia in the Hellenistic Period.” It’s part of a book called *A Companion to Ancient Education*. The ephebeia was like citizenship training in ancient Greece. So as part of every boy’s rite of passage to adulthood in citizenship training, they were given certain weapons to practice with. And just one quote here:

Military instruction was also given in throwing a spear (*akon*) and shooting a bow (*toxon*) to provide ephebes [MH: those who are in citizenship training] with the complementary skills of light-armed troops. So closely associated was archery with ephebic service that the bow or quiver might by itself symbolize [MH: be used as a symbol of the next sort of cohort—the next citizenship training class]...

They actually would use the bow as a symbol of that. So it was kind of a rudimentary or beginner’s bow that was very common. It didn’t stop its use there. I mean, you would find it used in battle alongside other weapons as well. But that’s kind of what you get with that. So any study on ancient Greco-Roman... Specifically, you’d want to narrow your search to Greece. Weaponry. And you can find a lot of that stuff that’s available hyperlinked for free if you use Google Scholar to run that search.

Now back to the comment about the arrows not being mentioned. So if you look for *toxon* in the Septuagint... If you ran a search in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, you would find the word used of the bow itself and also used of the quiver that would go with the bow. So it's safe to assume that arrows are present in the picture whether they're specifically mentioned or not. And by way of illustrating this, let me just use a parallel. Let me ask this question. Do we really need a writer or a TV broadcaster, a news reporter, to specifically mention bullets to know that bullets are in view in sentences like, "They entered the warehouse, guns drawn"? Or, "They approached the enemy, guns at the ready"? No. We intuitively know that they're not carrying weapons that are empty. We know that the bullets are in there. You don't have to mention the bullets. And it's the same thing with mentioning the *toxon*. If you mention the bow, well, it's assumed that you actually would use the *toxon*, and to use the *toxon*, you need arrows. So it's assumed that the arrows are just already a part of the picture. But the word is sometimes elastically translated enough in the Septuagint anyway to include the quiver and its arrows.

TS: Aaron says:

Truly, truly, Dr. Heiser has opened a door to reach common ground with anyone who is seeking to find out who and why they are here. Thank you, dot-connector.

MH: Yep, you're welcome.

TS: Tom from Dallas has a question about Revelation 8:1-6 (podcast Episode 375).

15:25

At about the 36-minute mark Mike says that the righteous will be resurrected to eternal life and the wicked to "eternal death." Now, here's the problem. I don't think the phrase or idea of "eternal death" appears anywhere in the Bible. What you always find is the counterpoint between "eternal life" and destruction, or the second death. I think people assume the idea of eternal death, but I don't find it in the Bible. I even looked up a website that listed "12 verses about everlasting death in the Bible," and *not one* of them contained that idea. It was all about destruction, or being cast into Hell, or about Hell being eternal, but nothing about death being everlasting. Obviously, this is about annihilationism, but I wonder if Mike thinks the phrase "eternal death" is defensible from the text of scripture.

MH: Yeah, it's correct to say that you don't get that specific phrase... I mean, you do get language that can be interpreted that way, and of course has been. And it can also be interpreted a different way, to support annihilationism. So I've actually commented on this in a number of places in the podcast, whether it be where it makes sense in the series on Revelation and some other Q&As. This

question ultimately... Because you can't answer the question by saying this phrase is absent or present in the text. Because whether a phrase is absent, whatever phrases are there can be interpreted in two directions. So we have to acknowledge that, which is where this is a debate between your traditional view of eternal torment and annihilationism, both of them result in something forever, at least in theory. Because if you're annihilated, you're gone forever. You're not going to come back. Okay? So that there's a forever duration involved in that. But it doesn't have the suffering of eternal torment—the traditional view. Rather it's talking about destruction that lasts forever.

So I've mentioned many times on the podcast that I think annihilation certainly needs to be on the table because of passages like "the death of death." How do we understand this? And ultimately this comes down to how literally or how metaphorically one defines death. Is death just separation from God? Does it include that idea and talk about physical termination? If it's physical termination of the body, but yet the spirit lives on, does that count as a death? Do we have death continuing on, even when death is eliminated? See to me, that's the fundamental question. How can death itself be destroyed and you have people who are still dying, i.e, they're still being eternally tormented? So the fact that that doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me makes me feel like annihilation makes a lot of good sense. And there are other reasons. I'm not going to rehearse all of them here. We had some of them recently in the Revelation 19-20 episodes. But at the same time, I can't also say that it's not possible that we should be reading the language differently—again, metaphorically in a different direction.

And let me add here, Isaiah 24:21-22, I think since this perspective sort of came from the annihilationist perspective, I'm going to potentially throw some weight to the traditional view here by making this extra little comment. If you go to Isaiah 24:21-22, that might be the passage in the Old Testament that is the most useful for defending a traditional view of everlasting punishment if you connect Isaiah 24:21-22 specifically to the lake of fire scenes at the end of the book of Revelation. So let me just open up my software here. I'm going to read Isaiah 24:21-22 to you so you don't have to struggle to know what in the world I'm talking about. But this is actually a fairly useful verse for those who are going to argue *against* the annihilation view and in favor of a more traditional view. So verse 21 says:

**²¹ On that day the LORD will punish
the host of heaven, in heaven,
and the kings of the earth, on the earth.**

**²² They will be gathered together
as prisoners in a pit;
they will be shut up in a prison,
and after many days they will be punished.**

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That's ESV. And we have a judgment both of earthly enemies at the Day of the Lord, and also judgment in the spiritual world—God's spiritual enemies—again, in the Day of the Lord. This is what the passage of Isaiah 24 is about. So now, if you look at that, depending on how you translate "for many days..." So let's just go back here. "After many days they will be punished." In verse 22, if you translate it "after many days," then it's a little bit clunky. Literally in the Hebrew, it's "from many days." And you *can* translate this to say something like, "for many days." So let me just read it again. So we have the earthly enemies punished, the spiritual enemies punished. Verse 22:

They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit...

Think lake of fire scene. "They will be shut up in a prison." Okay. And then comes the line. And I'm going to suggest you could translate it something like, "Many days" or "from many days they will be punished," or not with an intervening time after many days, they're going to be kept there and then punished later. But the punishment is going to be something that sort of happens concurrently with these judgments that are happening. So the idea of them being punished "from many days" or even "after many days," (you could massage your interpretation here), would be that the Day of the Lord has been waited for for a very long time. When it happens, bad guys both ethereal and physical are going to be gathered together. They're going to be punished. And that's going to wrap things up in one event in a climactic eschatological event that we've been waiting for for eons. Or, it could take a certain amount of time. We're not told in the book of Revelation. In other words, there's things you can do with Isaiah 24:21-22 to have some sort of duration going on here before a final annihilation. But you could certainly massage Isaiah 24:21-22 to be consistent with an annihilationist perspective as well.

I'm just saying that in this question, ultimately you have to look at verses like this one from Isaiah 24. You have to look at the lake of fire scenes in Revelation 19-20—these episodes that are described. We have to take comments from 1 Corinthians 15 about the death of death. You have to define what death is. Is it physical termination only? Is it termination of your spirit? Is it just separation from God, more metaphorically? You have to answer all these questions because the question the way it let off is correct. You don't get specifically a phrase like "eternal death" in the text of Scripture. You get "eternal life" and then there's this alternative. And the alternative might be "eternal death," even though that phrase doesn't appear. Or it could be destruction and the results of the destruction are enduring. They're never reversed, and therefore they are eternal.

So again, the quibbling about the languages is necessary because there are phrases we wish would show up in the text but don't. And the stuff that does show up in the text can be taken really two fundamentally different ways, depending on how you massage a few things, including Old Testament

passages. So this is why I say I think both views should be on the table. But annihilation should certainly be given consideration because it may very well be the one that makes the most sense. But I can't exclude the other. I can't just say that that's flim-flam or something like that. Because there are ways to get there and argue that perspective.

TS: Jon from Celina, TX, has our next question:

24:40

In the Revelation chapter 10 episode, we see the Old Testament references for the mighty angel. Another visual concept stood out to me about the Angel, and that is that he was standing on the water or sea (and land), similar to the Spirit hovering over the waters in creation, or Jesus walking on the waters. Does this water element connect to the Old Testament Jewish view of Yahweh in this passage (i.e., the creation narrative)? Does the reference to the rainbow over the Angel's head connect to this as well?

MH: The last part of that is the briefest. It really hasn't been a connection that anyone's argued for, probably because of the late entry (Genesis 9) of the rainbow in Genesis. In other words, if you'd have the rainbow present in Genesis 1, well, you know, then you could sort of connect it back to creation. And we'll grant that in Genesis 9 we have a re-creation, at least of what was destroyed in the Flood. And again, that depends if you think it's global or regional, blah blah blah, which we've talked about many times on the podcast. But since the rainbow enters the picture later than the rest of the creation imagery, it tends to not be looped into the discussion.

As to the other question about the Old Testament Jewish view of Yahweh and connecting that with Jesus, this is a really perceptive comment and question from Jon. Because the standing element here (standing on the water or the sea, and of course on the land as well), I'm willing to say this. I think conceptually that may very well connect to what we call angelomorphic Christology. And again, I'm assuming that people have listened to the series on Revelation. We get into angelomorphic Christology in a couple places in the book of Revelation. This is when Christ is depicted as an angel. And it doesn't mean that Christ is a created being, and blah blah blah blah. It's a connection back to the Old Testament Angel of the Lord, where that particular angel just happened to be Jehovah—just happened to be God. Okay? So it's a way of connecting Jesus to an Old Testament deity figure other than alongside Yahweh himself. Because in the Old Testament, you have two Yahwehs. You have Yahweh invisible and transcendent, and in the same scene sometimes (or separate)... They're both separate and together, depending on what passage you're in. You also have the angel of Yahweh, who is spoken of as though he is Yahweh. And again, for those who might just be flicking on the podcast for the first time, yes, I know that messenger formula in the ancient Near East has first-person grammatical

language—that the messenger could sort of pretend or be considered to be the one who sent him. Yeah, I know all that. It's just too bad that in Genesis 48:15-16, the angel says nothing. It's Jacob's assessment of the Angel of the Lord, and it clearly connects grammatically with the verb form in verse 16—it connects the angel with Yahweh. It fuses them together. And there are other places where the angel says, "I am the God of [inaudible]," I mean, what else do you want him to say? If you were trying to keep them separate, you wouldn't do things like this in the text.

But the point is that they're not. They don't need to. Because Israelite religion—Israelite theology of the biblical period—is like other religions of the ancient Near East in this respect. You could have a deity be more than one person at one time and in different places. The concept of the Godhead is very ancient. It's not something invented by New Testament writers or somebody at the Council of Nicea. It's millennia older than that. It's deeply entrenched into ancient Near Eastern modes of thinking about deities. So the fact here is that you might have an instance here where this angel could take us mentally (conceptually) back to Jesus walking on the water. I mean, it certainly... The episode of Jesus walking on the water is certainly a victory-over-chaos metaphor situation going on. It's certainly that. But do we get some Christological payoff from it? I'm willing to say that it really might be worth looping this into the angelomorphic Christology discussion.

Now what it ultimately... I shouldn't say ultimately. But what it predominantly might depend on would be the order of the writings. What came first? Let's just use Matthew. Matthew or the book of Revelation? Now again, for lay person, well, of course Matthew is first because when I open my New Testament, I read Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. And Revelation comes at the end. So Matthew had to be written before the book of Revelation was written. See, that's reasoning from a table of contents, [laughs] which is not a good way to reason about a biblical question. There's a lot of debate over the order of the Gospels in which they were written. Most scholars, it's fair to say, think Mark was first, followed by Matthew and Luke. There are others that argue that Matthew was first. Why is it important? Because if Matthew was written, let's say, before Revelation, then you really can't have John in Revelation too deliberately thinking about what's written in Matthew. Let me just say that better. I'm getting a little chronologically messed up here. At the time of the writing of Revelation, was Matthew around so that John could look at it or remember it or recall it and think, "Hmm. You know? I've got an angel here, treading on the sea. Maybe that's my way of talking about Jesus as being this particular angel in a victory over chaos?" Well, if Matthew exists before Revelation, that become more of a possibility. If Matthew was only written after Revelation, then you have a different set of circumstances. To me, this would actually be the better one [laughs] for angelomorphic Christology, because then you'd have Matthew taking an image here from the book of Revelation. Let's say Matthew was written in 100 A.D. or something, after

30:00

Revelation. Then you'd have Matthew going back to this angelic scene and connecting it that way, possibly with some of the other stuff in Revelation, thinking that his readers are going to know this material about the end and be able to connect those dots.

You know, all of this is speculation because we don't know for sure what was written first and what came next, and all this sort of thing. We tend to think that Matthew was written during Matthew's lifetime. He would've been dead by this time. John is the last apostle to survive. And we know that because Jesus tells us that's the way it's going to play out. So when scholars talk about the authorship of a Gospel, they're both talking about the initial author and then its final editorial compilation. And in Matthew, that's a relevant question. In all the books it's a relevant question. Because I think... Well, it's easier to demonstrate from Matthew. Matthew is famous for having chiasms everywhere. Okay? Did Matthew do all those on his own up front, or are at least some of them parts of editorial hands, to make one part of the book connect with another part of the book or to highlight some thought in Matthew that maybe the same episode is Mark doesn't highlight? In other words, who's making these decisions? Is it Matthew? Is the original writer? Or is it some later scribal hand assembling Matthew's material for posterity? We just don't know. We don't know how much of this activity went on. We don't know who did it. But it's pretty safe to say that some of it happens in some places. And so then the question becomes one of extrapolation. There's where you get into speculation.

So in the Old Testament, a lot of this kind of stuff is much more easily discernible, like switches from the first to the third person that we've talked about on the podcast before when we get into this subject. It's a lot easier to see an editorial hand in the Old Testament. But the reasoning is simple and, I think, sound. If editorial activity in the Old Testament is part of how we should think about inspiration, well then it's on the table for the New Testament as well. Again, that's a coherent conclusion to draw. But we don't know that it's actually true [laughs] or to what extent.

So that's a long, convoluted discussion of this one question. But the question is really an interesting one because of the order of the writings, and I think again, this is a possibility because of the sea reference. But your argument for or against it would be strengthened in one respect or the other by knowing which came first, which was the chicken and which was the egg. And I don't think we're going to be able to nail that down anytime soon.

TS: Donnie says:

34:15

I've come across some pagan allusions in Revelation like:

- **Seven seals used to seal Roman legal documents.**
- **Woman, child, dragon parallels.**

- **Egyptian and Greek mythology of Horus and Apollo.**
- **Harlot riding the beast as a Greek myth on creation of Europe.**

Does this mean John wrote this for a Hellenistic Jewish audience or pagan audience?

MH: Well, the answer is, he's writing to both. The Church—he's writing to the people alive at the time he's alive. And he's alive in the Hellenistic period. So it's obvious that he's writing to Hellenistic Jews because he's assuming a very deep knowledge of the Septuagint. If we've learned one thing through this podcast series on Revelation, it's that. John assumes that his audience knows their Old Testament via the Septuagint very well. So he assumes a lot on the part of his readers, but that's not to exclude pagans because the Septuagint wasn't just a book that only Hellenistic Jews read. The fact that you have the Hebrew Bible put into Greek, it was done in part to circulate this Jewish sacred book among Greek readers, just generally—the whole population. So among pagans, it became a literary work. They could read this and become quite familiar with it.

So he's really writing to a Church composed of both Hellenistic Jews (Jewish believers in Jesus) and those who are Gentile—who have come to faith in Jesus. But they're all using the Septuagint. That's the passageway in. So John knows his audience. And this is why he's doing what he's doing. So we can't isolate it to one or the other. It's really both.

The Septuagint itself (we could riff on this a little bit)... The Septuagint itself has Egypt as a provenance. This is where the work was done, at least according to the few sources that we have that might be relevant to how the Septuagint came to be. You can read any number of introductions on the Septuagint. What you're going to find is that the book was essentially produced by Jewish translators of the Hebrew Bible to do two things: 1) Generally promote Judaism in the Hellenistic world; whether that's a Jewish audience or a pagan audience, they want people to know about the acts and power of the God of Israel on behalf of his people, so it's done for that reason. 2) And also, more politically, it's done to better market the Ptolemies, who are the rulers in Egypt at the time, who have a good track record of being patrons of the arts and friendly toward Jewish communities (and learning more broadly). Think of the library at Alexandria, okay? This is during the reign of the Ptolemies. So the Septuagint is part of that matrix of ideas.

Now I'm going to quote a little bit about the sources that we have from Jennifer Dines' book on the Septuagint—her introductory book on the Septuagint. Because we basically have two sources. We got something called The Letter of Aristeas, and then we have excerpts from the ancient historical writer Aristobulus. And his work is excerpted from other literary works itself. So let me just read a little bit and you'll know that, again, there's an Egyptian provenance to

this which would have opened the gate to exposing Judaism—exposing the Torah (the whole Hebrew Bible, more than the Torah)—to a pagan world, to a Greek-speaking world, regardless of whether they were Jewish or not. So about the Letter of Aristeas, Dines has a few things to say, just generally. She says:

Evidence begins to accumulate for the existence of many books of the Hebrew Bible in Greek from the mid-second century BCE. By the end of the first century CE, wider collections were in circulation among both Greek-speaking Jews and Christians, some of them revised in various ways. By the time of the first nearly complete manuscripts in the fourth century, all the books of the LXX were established as Scripture in the Christian churches, although within Greek-speaking Judaism alternative versions, especially Aquila's, were also widely used...

40:00 Now let me just stop there. What she's saying is, by the fourth century A.D. (think of the great manuscript Sinaiticus, which included the Septuagint)... By the fourth century A.D. (so we're talking here about the 300s A.D.), you have all of the Hebrew Bible in Greek (i.e., the Septuagint) accounted for. All the portions have been put into Greek. And that has become, by that time, the Old Testament of Christian churches everywhere, largely because it's a Greek-speaking world. And Jews also used the Septuagint. It was discouraged. We've talked about this in relationship to the two powers in heaven being declared a heresy. But they were aware there was a Septuagint. They used it, whether they should have or not, depending on their own community's direction. It was up to the individual. But there were different versions of the Septuagint because it was getting copied and we know that the copies aren't identical or anything like that. It's the same issue with the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament. And so one of the versions that we know of the Septuagint that departs a little bit from some other version of the Septuagint we know is called Aquila. There's Aquila's version. There's Theodosius' version. Then there's just something that would be called the Septuagint or Old Greek. Again, the terms overlap at some point. They overlap and yet are also distinct. So I don't want to turn this into a terminology class on the Septuagint; that'd be pretty boring. But anyway, there's a lot of this stuff around for the wider Greek-speaking world.

Now the Letter of Aristeas tells us how this sort of circumstance began. And so Dines writes of this one ancient source. It's a letter. And it gets into the creation of the Septuagint. So she says:

At face value, this entertaining but enigmatic work is an eyewitness account, by a pagan Greek at the court of Philadelphus, of how seventy-two Jewish scholars were brought from Jerusalem to translate the Law into Greek for inclusion in the royal library at Alexandria. The consensus is, however, that the anonymous author was really a Jew writing not in the third but in the second century BCE. There is no agreement as to exactly when...

So she continues and says:

‘Aristeas’ himself, despite his veneer of sympathetic paganism, clearly writes as a Jew with a Jewish agenda... The story is set in the reign of the second Ptolemy (285–246 BCE), but there are several historical inaccuracies.

So she’s saying, at least the letter gets the setting right. It makes sense in terms of the Septuagint’s point of origin being Egypt under the Ptolemies. Because the second source (Aristobulus) also says the same thing. So it’s a corroborative source. And Dines writes of Aristobulus:

The writings of this interesting early apologist for the compatibility of Jewish faith and Greek philosophy survive in only a few fragments. Extracted from the work of the non-Jewish writer Alexander Polyhistor (first century BCE), they are quoted by the Christian writers Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea (third and fourth centuries CE respectively).

So in one fragment of Aristobulus’ fragments, you actually get a comment about the Greek translation of the Mosaic law. And so Dines says a little bit more about this, and we read this:

The only reference to the LXX comes in Fragment 3, in the context of a demonstration by Aristobulus that Pythagoras, Plato and other Greeks took their best ideas from earlier, partial versions of the Mosaic law: ‘before the dominion of Alexander and the Persians, others had translated (diērmēneutai... di’heterōn) accounts of the events surrounding the exodus from Egypt of the Hebrews, our countrymen, and the disclosure to them of all the things that had happened as well as their domination of the land, and the detailed account of the entire law...’ (Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* (PE))

So that’s a little passage that she excerpts from Eusebius. So the point is that the Septuagint would’ve had a wide readership. And because John is hooking into the Septuagint so frequently in the book of Revelation, it’s safe to say that John has a very wide audience in mind on both sides.

TS: Mark says:

Just wanted to shoot you a quick email from across the pond. I really enjoy Dr. Heiser’s podcast. Love the perspective of the Divine Council. Pray for his physical health and the Lord will see him through this challenging time. Love to his wife and family.

MH: Yeah, thank you.

TS: Our next question is from P.

44:25

I have a two-part question regarding the locusts. I've gone and looked at the iconography of the Scorpion Apkallu and every aspect of the description of these locusts matches. The little lore on them we have matches the location of the doorway to Abaddon. In Gilgamesh, they guarded the gate of the underworld keeping the dead in and the living out. They are also depicted as warriors. Is the author imagining Girtablilu as unclean spirits (Scorpion Apkallu)? Are these also the supernatural army that Joel 2 speaks of? Is Revelation 9 working with Joel 2 here?

45:00

MH: Yeah, I think the second part is easier to begin with here. I think Revelation 9 certainly is citing Joel 2. And I mentioned that briefly when we were talking about Revelation 9. But I wanted to... I didn't want to spend too much time on it because I wanted to get into the Watcher angle, since I think that's more interesting. But certainly through the Septuagint of Joel, that is being used in Revelation 9. You know, Joel himself is writing about an earthly army. But we also from Joel and some other Prophets... We just not too long ago talked a little bit about Isaiah 24:21. You get these passages that merge the earthly armies with judgment in the spiritual world as well. I mean, John is certainly doing that. And in Revelation 9 I think he really is tapping into the original Genesis 6 problem—the imprisoned Watchers whose context ultimately is from Mesopotamia and the Apkallu. So I think there is a relationship there. And again, the allusions to the Septuagint Joel are pretty clear. So that's the easy part.

Now if we say that, that might make it sound like the Gilgamesh connection is secondary. And I'll grant, yeah, it probably is. But if this is a reference to the imprisoned Watchers—the imprisoned sons of God of Genesis 6 (which is the position I take in regard to Revelation 9)... And that episode does hook back into Gilgamesh and the Book of the Watchers and the Book of the Giants from Qumran—all this stuff that we talked about in that particular episode in the series.

Even though that might be sort of secondary... In other words, we don't really have John citing things word-for-word from the Book of the Giants, where we do have him citing word-for-word from Joel 2. Okay, I get that. But we need to honor the connections that are here, back to the Gilgamesh material. It is certain—it is absolutely certain (and there's a good deal of scholarship connecting the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation back to Qumran)... It is certain that at Qumran, Gilgamesh was known. Okay, this material was known. And we have allusions to Gilgamesh material in the Book of the Watchers. We have Gilgamesh named along with a few other giants in the Book of Giants from Qumran. It is certain that Gilgamesh was known. So I think both of these ideas are in play—that yes, we're dealing with Joel 2 here, but we are also dealing ultimately with the Apkallu fallen sons of God tradition as well, and the Watchers

tradition. Using imagery associated with chaos figures from a Jewish perspective from Mesopotamia would make perfect sense. I mean, John's going to do this in Revelation 16, 17, 18. And when we get to the beast and the number and the mountains and the rivers, we're going to get overloaded with Babylonish imagery. And all I'm suggesting is, this is more of the same. It's just that since we don't know the story of the Apkallu, which would take us back into the Book of [audio breaks up] and make sense of not only the language in 2 Peter 2 about the spirits in prison and Jude, but also here when we have these imprisoned entities released. If we don't know the original Mesopotamian story about that, we're never going to go through that little thought chain that I just did. And so that's the problem.

So it would be very consistent of John (because he loops in so much Babylonish stuff later) to be looping Babylonish stuff in here, to be playing off Babylonian chaos imagery, which the Apkallu (from a Jewish perspective) certainly are. They're the bad guys. They're the reason that Babylon is great, and they're the reason that Babylon is basically the kings of idolatry, from a Jewish perspective.

If all of this, by the way, is unfamiliar to people listening to this episode, you need to read *Reversing Hermon* or the *Demons* book and you'll get the full layout of the material on this. But doing it in Revelation 9 would make perfect sense. And Gilgamesh is part of that. So if you're going to use that material to portray the release of the Watchers in Revelation 9—their release from the Abyss (and again, that's my view here), they're released to their own destruction. It's a precursor to their own destruction at the ultimate Day of the Lord when the messiah returns and death and chaos are dealt with. This is a perfectly reasonable literary and theological strategy on what to do. So both of them are in play. So we don't want to focus so much on Joel 2 that we miss the other. It's easy to miss because we're not exposed to it and there's no direct citation. But if we realize that John loops back into this Babylonish stuff in plenty of other places, what about here? That makes sense along a number of lines of thought.

TS: Alright, that was our last question, and our last comment is from the Remington family. And they say:

Thanks from the Remington family for providing excellent biblical content for many years.

Alright, Mike.

MH: Absolutely.

TS: And just like that, Part 4 is done. We've got two more parts, and Part 5 will be coming next week. And we appreciate you, Mike, taking the time to answer your favorite book's questions. [MH laughs]

MH: Hey, you know, it's part of the turf. You know? What can you do?

TS: Alright. Well, it's good stuff. We appreciate it. And just like that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.