

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 424

Q&A 50

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Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- Do you see parallels between Jesus and the Jehovah's Witness view of Michael, the archangel? [Time stamp 3:55]
- Why were the captain and his 50 men sent by King Ahaziah to Elijah killed? Weren't they just messengers? [8:25]
- Why do you think September 11, 2001, landed on Tishrei 1? [11:12]
- Was Abel's offering accepted and not Cain's because Abel was offering blood to cleanse a place? [15:00]
- Is the Holy One of God the same as the Holy One of Israel, and how does this play out in Daniel 10 when the prince of Persia resists the angel? [18:25]

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 424: Our 50th Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike? How are you feeling?

MH: Oh, not too bad today. It's been a good week.

TS: That's good, that's good. Hey, I've been meaning to ask you about this curse tablet that was found last month in Israel. Do you have any comments on it? Have you read about it?

MH: Yeah, well, I've read a little bit about it. It's interesting. I mean, it's going to have to be published under peer review, especially if you want to get a decent hand drawing of the text itself—the characters. If it's really Paleo-Hebrew, which is one of the claims, that would be interesting because there are not a whole lot of Paleo-Hebrew artifacts, just generally. So that would make it interesting all by itself. I mean, it's not a quotation of anything in the Bible, but it would have the divine name in it, which would be, again, noteworthy especially if its Paleo. So we'll see. We'll see what comes out of the publication.

TS: Just for people who don't know about it, they dated it back to about 1500 BC which is a couple hundred years older than the Dead Sea Scrolls. So it would be the earliest recording of the name Yahweh.

MH: Right, well it would be over 1000 years older than the Dead Sea Scrolls.

TS: Oh, 1000, okay.

MH: Yeah, if it's 1500 BC.

TS: Don't quote me on that. I might've gotten my dates wrong.

MH: Well, there are... I mean, like in grad school when we had to study Epigraphic Hebrew, all the stuff is nonbiblical. And the oldest stuff just used round numbers. It could go back to about 1000 BC. So if this is an example of Paleo-Hebrew with a divine name in it, then you're looking at something that's centuries older than the oldest stuff we have for that.

TS: That's pretty cool, pretty interesting. Well, we'll definitely keep our eye out for that publication later this year for sure.

MH: Yeah.

TS: Alright, Mike, well, congratulations. We're on our 50th Q&A.

MH: It's hard to believe.

TS: Before we get to our questions, I do have an email from one of our listeners that I wanted to read because I thought it was funny and I wanted to include some of our listeners' emails. I get so many. But this one caught me on the right time and it's from Levi and this is his email to me:

I wanted to share a fun story from our breakfast discussion this morning. My wife and I were discussing the Paul in the Old Testament Series at breakfast in the morning. Our kids were listening to the discussion, and we said the phrase, "The Naked Bible," and our 7-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son immediately responded in surprise, "The Naked Bible? Why is it The Naked Bible?" We explained that it was a figure of speech and then my daughter thought for a moment and then said, "Oh, so the Bible in the raw," and my son interjected, "No, it's because they took off God's clothes when they crucified him."

So I thought that was a funny perspective...

MH: Oh, my gosh. Yeah, that is funny.

TS: ...from a 5 and 7-year-old, yeah.

MH: Yeah.

TS: So I appreciate Levi sending that funny story, yeah.

MH: That's good stuff.

TS: Yeah, it is good stuff. I love it. Alright, Mike, well, we've got some questions here. We might as well get into them if you're ready.

MH: Sure.

TS: Alright, our first one is from Michael and he says:

3:55

As a fellow Michael, I have heard you mention the archangel by the same name. As I understand, it means, "Who is like God," and certain groups like Jehovah's Witness use that to mean Jesus was Michael or vice versa. I see some parallels and don't necessarily think it is a huge or even salvation issue, but I have wrestled with this and I'm curious about your thoughts on the matter.

5:00

MH: Yeah, well, Michael... First of all, it's not a statement. It's not like... I hate to do the grammar talk here, but it's not like a relative pronoun—a word that can mean "who," "which," or "that" is like God. So it's not a statement: "who is like God," "the one who is like God." It's actually a question. It's asking a question, "Who is like God?" So *mi* in Hebrew is the interrogative pronoun to ask a question, "Who?" and then *ka* is your comparative particle "as" or "like," and then *el* is a God. So *me-ka-el* is a question: "Who is like God?" It's a rhetorical sort of question. So if you're using that to sort of say it's a similarity to God, like a declarative statement... If the Jehovah's Witness logic is using it in that way, it sort of implodes out of the gate. They misunderstand what *mekael* is in terms of Hebrew.

On Michael himself, the best answer I can give you is to read my *Angels* book, right around pages 68-73. Those 4, 5, 6 pages there... [audio breaks up], the short version would be Michael, and as the text of Daniel 10 says "one of the chief princes." So he is *one* of a group of chief princes. So unless we have a group of Jesuses, (which is even hard to say), in the spiritual world, the logic equating Jesus and Michael implodes again. Jesus wouldn't be unique even in their view. He'd be one among a group of equals. So Michael is one of the chief princes. And by virtue of that, again, if that's Jesus, then we've got more than

one Jesus. We've got a bunch of Jesuses up there, too, so that doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

So, Michael, if you're going to read through the book of Daniel, has a superior in the book of Daniel—the prince of the Lord's host or the prince of the host or the prince of princes—various titles, Daniel 8-10. And the former of those... This idea of the prince of the Lord's host is parallel to the figure of Joshua 5, the captain of the Lord's army. It's the same word—*sar*, captain or *sar*, prince. It's the commander of the Lord's army.

So again, as I talk about in my *Angels* book and also in *Unseen Realm*, that figure is the Angel of the Lord. We know that because of the phrase in Joshua 5, that the figure is standing there with his drawn sword in his hand. That's a phrase... The exact phrase occurs only two other places in the Hebrew Bible and both of them are used as the "Angel of the Lord." So if the "Angel of the Lord" is Yahweh in human form, well, there you have your precursor to Jesus—Yahweh in human form. The figure is Yahweh. It's, again, part of the two Yahweh's complex. We have these figures like the Angel who is-but-isn't Yahweh. He is Yahweh, but yet Yahweh (invisible and transcendent) can also be in the same scene with the angel. They can be separate figures, or their identities can be blurred. And so, again, this is something I discuss at length in *Unseen Realm*. In that case, the two Yahweh's stuff, it's going to be around pages, I don't know, 120-150, somewhere in there. It's chapter 16-18. But there's a lot to it, so I'm not going to read five pages here to answer this question, but that's the short version.

TS: Tamrat says he is an Ethiopian who lives in the US now. And his question is on 2 Kings 1:9 about the captain of 50 men with the 50 that King Ahaziah sends to Elijah.

8:25

Why were they killed? Weren't they simply messengers who just said, "The king said to come down?" Looks like the messengers that were sent to inquire of Ba'alzebub whom Elijah encounters were treated as nothing more than mere messengers and were not harmed. Why were the captains of 50 men killed?

MH: Well, I don't know that we can read that into it. That one group was... I mean, this happens three times all total. So it happens two previous times; a third group was spared (the last group is the one that's spared, the first two groups are the ones that are not). So the third captain shows respect to Elijah and Yahweh. He acknowledged Yahweh's authority and power and asked to be spared, so he was. There's no indication that the other groups did. Either their leader, the captain of the 50, or any of the 50... They didn't humble themselves before Yahweh.

10:00 The episode is also spiritual warfare against Baal. I think we should not lose sight of this. You have to recall that the chapter begins with Ahaziah seeking to inquire of Ba'alzebub, the god of Ekron for deliverance from his particular illness. He wants deliverance so he is going to inquire of Ba'alzebub. He sends this delegation, and they get intercepted by Elijah at Yahweh's direction and turn back, and that's fine. Nobody dies. He just sends them back, but then Ahaziah sends companies of 50, really, in a series of retaliations against Elijah, Yahweh's prophet, and ultimately Yahweh himself. Sending companies of 50, this an act of defiance against God. So his men pay for that defiance with their lives when they encounter the prophet of Yahweh and challenge him and Yahweh with their demands. And they don't humble themselves at all until the last group. God chooses to make them all an object lesson and to belittle Baal. So we have to ask questions like, "Where is Baal to protect them," "Where is Baal to thwart Yahweh's will in regard to Ahaziah's illness?" Baal is absent and feckless and that is part of the teaching point of the drama. He is not only powerless to save Ahaziah, but he's also powerless to save the soldiers under him. So ultimately God gets to decide how evil and defiance is dealt with. In this case, it costs some men their lives when they're defiant. If you serve another god, you play at your own risk. I mean, that's the teaching point of the passage.

TS: Andrew has our next question.

11:12 **I looked up September 11, 2001 on a Jewish calendar, and that is the 23rd of Elul. The first day of Tishrei is one week later on September 18th. I know Mike often sells himself short, but he is too good of a scholar to make a mistake that is so easily disproved by a cursory look at a Jewish calendar. If September 11, 2001 wasn't the first day of Tishrei, how could it be a shot across the bow from the demonic forces to God on Jesus' birthday? What am I missing?**

MH: Well, you're missing... You can't just pick up a Jewish calendar for today and assume that it aligns astronomically with something that happened in 2 or 3 BC. So that's the big assumption. Not every date falls on the same day every year, especially when you're talking about the Jewish calendar. The standard Jewish calendar suffers slippage over the course of years and periodically requires a 13th month to be inserted to align it with Passover. This is still done today, and it goes all the way back to antiquity. Because the standard calendar that is used today is drawn from the Torah. And that's a lunar calendar and you don't have months of equal days. They don't add up to 365. So every once in a while, you'd have to insert extra days into the calendar to make the description of when you're supposed to observe Passover line up with the calendar you're using. This is the whole reason why the Essenes at Qumran refused to use the Jewish calendar of antiquity. This goes all the way back to ancient times. They refused to use it because men had to add days to it to make it work, periodically. So they thought it was a human contrivance. So the people at Qumran used a

calendar of 360 days, plus four days between the four quadrants. The four 90-day quadrants added up to 364, but they used that calendar because it was mathematically perfect. If you use that one, all of your feasts and festivals are going to happen the same day every year for mathematical reasons. They knew that it wouldn't match real-time astronomy. They knew that missing that 365 in a quarter... That day in a quarter would cause slippage around the seasons, but they didn't care because they were going for the ritual. They were not trying to align it with the seasons.

We also have to remember that the calendar that Judaism uses today was not the original ancient Biblical calendar. The original ancient Biblical calendar was one that was agrarian. It aligned to feasts and festivals. It was an agrarian calendar. Only when you get to the time of the Exodus does God institute a new calendar, and then he gives precise days for when Passover is supposed to be. We have a new first month. God just declares it. "The month that you came out of Egypt, well, that's the first month now, so we're going to have a new calendar." Again, that calendar is not the same as the original Old Testament Jewish calendar. And because of the fact that you have to keep adding days to it periodically means that you can't just pick up a calendar today and try to make some sort of alignment back to a time that's 3 and 2 BC date. All the astronomical sources that I have that get into this issue have September 11th either 3 or 2 BC as Tishrei 1. So there's a lot more to it than just picking up a Jewish calendar off the internet or something like that and looking at what day it is on our calendar today.

TS: Darrell has our next question. He has a question about Genesis 4:7 and Leviticus 1:3-4.

15:00

I was listening to Mike talk about acceptance as the goal of the burnt offering, and I couldn't help but notice that in Genesis 4:7 in the ESV, Yahweh says to Cain, "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" Could it be that Abel was offering a sort of burnt offering before Yahweh involving blood to cleanse a space and Cain's offering was not, and as a result, Cain's offering was not treated the way Abel's was?

MH: Well, that would be a guess and, honestly, it might be as good of a guess as any other guesses when it comes to Genesis 4 and why Cain's offering was not accepted. It's hard to know because Cain and Abel are... The story is set in days that are before the Levitical laws. Now this gets you into, well, if it was written, and it was... The text was written after the time period of the story. Maybe the writer has just inserted Levitical stuff in there, kind of like the clean and unclean animals that are put on the ark and taken off. The whole clean and unclean concept wouldn't happen for a long, long time later, but there it is in the story. So it's possible that we could have this kind of thinking going on in the Cain

and Abel story, even though the story is set prior to Levitical law and concepts of sacred space and what not, but it's little more than a guess.

I would also caution that you can't use English words. I mean, when I am talking in the podcast series in Leviticus 1, I'm using ESV language. I'm using English. So a word like "accept" or "acceptance," we can't necessarily think that that's the same word as occurs back in Genesis 4, and in this case it's not. The words are not the same—the Hebrew words are not the same. So we have to be cautious when we hear someone talk about the Bible and use English translation. It might sound the same in two passages when it's actually different. The one in Genesis 4:7 is about "lifting up"—there a Biblical expression "to lift up the face." And it can denote acceptance that two parties are on good terms with each other. It can denote that, but the Hebrew terminology used in Leviticus is actually different. So, again, we just need to be a little cautious there.

TS: The last one's from Doug in College Station, Texas. I will not say Gige'm, although I just did because they're Aggies. Mike, I don't know if you know about the Aggies, but you either love 'em or you hate 'em.

MH: I've heard of the Aggies, but I don't know with Gige'm is.

TS: I don't either, Mike. I don't either. I don't either, to be honest and that's okay. We'll move along, move along. Can't talk about Aggies too much. I've got several friends that are Aggies so we get into play fights all the time. Okay, Mike.

Doug has a question about Yahweh's relationship to Israel being contrasted with his relationship to other nations, plus Michael's relationship to Israel, since Daniel 10 calls him Daniel's or Israel's "prince."

18:25

What should we make of this title that Yahweh gets many times in the Psalms and Isaiah: "the Holy One of Israel?" I presume that communicates the idea that Israel is his portion. He did not give them to another being, but kept them for himself. So all nations have their own "holy one," but Yahweh himself is Israel's Holy One. Is that right? Additionally, in Mark and Luke, Legion says to Jesus, "I know who you are—the Holy One of God." Is that different than "The Holy One of Israel?" What does it mean that Jesus is the Holy One of God? The disciples also call Jesus by this title in John 6:69.

Still, Daniel 10 depicts a few items related to all of that, but still rather confusing. He depicts a being whose description is like a stock description of God on the throne. That's Jesus, right? This person says, though, that he fought the prince of Persia for 21 days and the prince of Persia withstood him. And Michael came to help him. So that must *not* be Jesus/anthropomorphic Yahweh, right? Because

God wouldn't need help fighting anyone. And that person, the prince of Persia, is a rebellious holy one, right? And also the prince of Greece who is also mentioned there, right? At the very end of Daniel 10, it says that Michael is Daniel's or Israel's prince. So does that mean that Yahweh is not Israel's Holy One, but Michael is? That's all quite confusing.

MH: Well, I would agree. It is confusing and the question is confusing. There's about 10 questions in here, and honestly, I don't know that I can even follow what was going on in there. A couple of things. If we presume that the figure fighting the prince of Persia is Michael's superior... If we assume that (and we have to make that assumption for the sake of saying something about at least that part of the question or the series of questions), we should not assume that God cannot be opposed. Why would we assume that? We can resist the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us that. He tells us not to do it. The spirit can be quenched by us, okay? The fact that you have God and deity and the fact that God will get his way in the end doesn't mean that God... This doesn't mean that spiritual warfare isn't real. God can be resisted. He can be opposed, okay? What he wants to have happen can be thwarted, but God is ultimately going to win. We can do all those things, much less a supernatural being like the prince of Persia. So I think we read a little too much into this 21 days thing, and by virtue of maybe theology we've been brought up on, our mind goes in one particular direction and cancels out meanings or endorses other meanings. But that's just plucking one, like I said, of about 10 questions out here.

The Holy One of God is a messianic title, so it's not an equated title with Holy One of Israel because the messiah himself is not... The messiah is the God-man. He's not God himself. In other words, when we have the messiah come on the scene, the Trinity doesn't grow. It doesn't multiply. So there's a bit of a mis-overlap there going on in the questions as well. But it's just a messianic title.

I think there's also some problem with reading the Deuteronomy 32 idea into both of the princes idea of Daniel 10. The princes aren't called "sons of God" or vice versa in Daniel. Michael being Israel's patron angelic figure is fine because that's how he's described in Daniel 12, for instance. But the Holy One of Israel, that title itself shouldn't be filtered through Deuteronomy 32. In other words, there's nothing about the words, "Holy One of Israel," that root them to geography in a way that a phrase like the "sons of God" do if, again, the context allows or the context directs us to the Babel event. I mean, you can have the phrase "sons of God." It doesn't mean we're talking about the Babel event unless there's something in context that would direct us to think that. So we don't have that necessarily. I mean, the princes are over geographical regions, that's true, but we get that by virtue of the description, not by virtue of the title "Holy One" or "holy ones."

Again, it's hard for me to even parse these questions and come out with something coherent here. "Holy One" is just a supernatural being or a deity or something like that, okay? In this case, the Holy One of Israel happens to be Yahweh. All *elohim*, if not in rebellion, can rightfully be called holy ones. And they are—Psalm 89. The members of the heavenly hosts who are still loyal to Yahweh are holy ones, but that doesn't mean they have geographical linkages. The council now... Again, the loyal council members like in Psalm 89, they're not attached to any geography but they're called holy ones. They're called sons of God, but there's nothing in the context that links them to geography. In fact, if they're the good guys, then the patron being assigned to Israel is Michael because that's what Daniel says. And so these holy ones in Psalm 89 or these sons of God in Psalm 89 don't have any sort of geographical flavoring to them.

So we have to look to context so, again, the phrase "Holy One of Israel" doesn't require the land allotment idea. What I mean by that is the phrase itself. Now since it's speaking of Yahweh, well there are other reasons that Yahweh has chosen this land to give to his people, and so on and so forth, but he has Michael as steward over it in terms of the spiritual warfare conflict. That doesn't mean Yahweh's not in charge. Yahweh's always in charge. He will get his way, but he's in the midst of a conflict between himself as a freewill being and other freewill beings who are supernatural, and even freewill beings who are human. Again, we can thwart the spirit. We're told not to do that. We're told not to quench the spirit. We're told not to resist, but we can and we do to our detriment. So we shouldn't think that because God is God, there is no conflict, there is no warfare, there is no battle that's real. That's not the picture that emerges.

25:00

So I think we've got some problems there going on, too, and I don't know if any of that helps. Because like I said, there are so many questions bound up in this paragraph that in a Q&A I don't know that I can make sense of it, but there you go.

TS: Alright, Mike. It's good enough. And we're going to be doing Q&As here over the next few episodes so we're going to try to tackle some of these questions. And then after that you're going to take on Walton's book.

MH: Yeah, I'll have something to say about Walton's book for at least an episode. Honestly, I'm doing it because people are asking for it, not because it's of interest. But it's good to say something, I guess, even though Walton's book is not directed at me.

TS: Sure.

MH: I mean, he mentions *Unseen Realm* in one footnote. I get the impression that he hadn't even read it. He had not read *Unseen Realm*, but rather it is directed at Greg Boyd's work. And I have not read *God at War* so I can't really

assess what Walton is saying about Boyd either, but I can address other things that crop up in the book, and so that's what we'll be doing when we hit that point.

TS: Okay, we'll be looking forward to that and we appreciate everybody sending in their questions and appreciate Levi sending in that email about his kids. So with that I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.