

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 425

Q&A 51

May 14, 2022

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Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- Does Messiah ben Joseph connect to the idea that “all Israel will be saved?” [Time stamp 3:45]
- Could Jesus make mistakes, in particular by misidentifying Ahimelech as Abiathar in Mark 2:26? [6:05]
- What does the phrase “lift up my eyes” signify? [13:10]
- What is the meaning behind the story of Miriam and Aaron speaking against Moses’ Ethiopian wife? [14:30]
- Is it possible that the Father God and Mother Wisdom begot Jesus? [16:55]

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 425: Our 51st Q&A. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike? What’s going on?

MH: Well, not a whole lot except for... Guess what? Our family is going to expand, Trey.

TS: Oh, yeah? You and Drenna expecting a new kid?

MH: [laughs] We’re expecting a new pug.

TS: Uh, well that’s the same thing.

MH: Yeah.

TS: A pug.

MH: Pretty much the same thing. We’re pretty much getting a toddler, another toddler.

TS: Yeah, alright.

MH: So yeah.

TS: What prompted this?

MH: Oh, we've talked about it forever because we liked, of course, Mory and Norman, and we've been talking about getting another one, a puppy, for a while. My wife follows some of these breeders on Facebook and Instagram or whatever—the social media. So she put in for a puppy and a litter not too long ago was produced. So we're going to get one of them. It'll be on into the month of May before we pick it up, but yeah, so we're looking forward to that. We're going to get a girl this time and we're not going to name it after a villain. So no more Norman Bates or Moriarty.

TS: Well, do you have some name options?

MH: Yeah, the girls here want to name it Stevie. So that's what the name's going to be.

TS: Okay.

MH: It's going to be a merle pug—one of those kind of with the mottled fur. So something different where we can tell them apart when they're the same size.

TS: Yeah. Well, that's exciting. You all just need to become like a pug sanctuary. You all need to just adopt all...

MH: Well, that's my dream—to raise pugs. Yeah, so...

TS: Yeah.

MH: I don't think that's ever going to happen.

TS: You need to get you some land and just retired out there. Write books and just raise pugs.

MH: That's right. When we went to pick up Norman... This is when we lived in Washington. We had to go into Oregon to get him and we went to the breeder's location, and this guy had land and he had different parts of his land sectioned off by litter so that they wouldn't get mixed up. And there were like 3 or 4 pug runs. I refer to them as pug runs in this guy's yard. I just looked at Drenna when we pulled up and I said, "I have seen my future."

TS: Yeah, that's funny. That's awesome.

MH: Yeah, so it'll be fun.

TS: There's lots of land in Texas for sale so just come on. Make it happen. No reason not to.

MH: Texas pugs, yeah.

TS: Yeah, you don't need the ocean anyway. You don't like it.

MH: Are pugs bigger in Texas?

TS: Everything's bigger in Texas, Mike. You know this, come on.

MH: Yeah, I figured you'd say that.

TS: Yeah, absolutely. Alright. Well, speaking of bigger, we've got some big questions here. I don't know if that's a good segue or not, but it's the best I got.

MH: Yeah.

TS: Let's just jump in, if you don't mind.

MH: Sure.

TS: The first one's from Ken and Ken asks:

3:45

Does Dr. Heiser see any potential threads connecting this idea of Messiah ben Joseph to episode 102 of the Naked Bible Podcast? What does "all Israel will be saved" mean? In particular, tying it to the work of the Jason Staples paper referenced throughout that episode (#102).

MH: Yeah, well you wouldn't need Messiah ben Joseph for all Israel being saved, especially if the phrase means... And again, who's going to settle this question? But if the phrase refers to nonphysical Israelites (the seed of Abraham as Paul talks about referring to both Jew and Gentiles)... In other words, everyone who is a believer... You certainly don't need the Messiah ben Joseph to be an element of that.

5:00

However, having said that, this is kind of an interesting trajectory because certainly part of the Pentecost event involves the reunification of the tribes into one body. And that one body isn't physical Israel anymore, but it would be the Church. So in that respect, the nomenclature here about... You have a Messiah from Ephraim or Joseph and a Messiah from Judah and they are both the same person. The nomenclature here does sort of cover both kingdoms. But to say any more, though, I think I'd need Paul to cite one or two Messiah ben Joseph texts, which he doesn't really do. So that's one thing in its way, but it's an interesting

thought trajectory [audio breaks up] tribes would happen in the new covenant. And we are living in new covenant days, which is quite clear from scripture. So that's happened, but the Messiah ben Joseph element isn't an overt part of that. Like I said, without Paul tapping into one of these passages that David Mitchell referred to in that episode, I don't know how that you would make the argument other than to say it kind of sort of looks like it's part of the picture even though it's never made explicit.

TS: Our next one is from Paul from Maryland.

6:05

We know from Scripture that Jesus was without sin. However, being that Jesus was God AND human, could he have made mistakes? I ask because it seems possible that Jesus misidentifies Ahimelech as Abiathar in Mark 2:26. I know there is scholarly debate on this issue, but could it be plausible that Jesus' human brain messed up in this instance?

MS: Yeah, personally I don't think so. I think if this was construed as a clear error originally (and the word "originally" is going to become important here as I try to unravel this)... I think if this was construed as an original error, when the conversation originally happened, the Pharisees would've called Jesus on it. But they don't. And there would be no reason for Mark to just skip it or to include it if it was an error because the other gospels don't even include the episode. But a couple of thoughts... So looking this up real quick, this is from the *Expositor's Bible Commentary Series*, the volume that includes the Gospel of Mark. He says:

The problem associated with the phrase *epi Abiathar archiereos* is well-known.

This is Mark 2:26.

If it means 'at the time when Abiathar was high priest,' it is incorrect historically. At the time the incident occurred, Ahimelech, Abiathar's father, was high priest; and it was from him David received the consecrated bread. The difficulty is revealed by the fact that neither Matthew nor Luke records the phrase in the parallel passages and it is not found in several manuscripts...

Which again, it could be a late intrusion because it's not found in several manuscripts. So that's one issue. Continuing on with Wessel:

In some manuscripts, a definite article is inserted before the Greek for "high priest." This would make possible the translation "in the time of Abiathar, the one who [later] became high priest."

So you might... On the other side of it, you might have had scribes see this as a problem and try to fix it that way. Back to Wessel:

It is this reconstruction that NIV's "in the days of" translation reflects." Another possibility is to translate the preposition "*epi*" as "in the account of," as is done in Mark 12:26 (*epi tou batou*, "in the account of the bush").

If that was the case, then you would have not "at the time Abiathar was high priest," but "in the account of his becoming the high priest." So that would be a way to resolve the issue, but none of those solutions is entirely satisfactory.

10:00

I also looked this up in R.T. France's commentary. I like R.T. France's commentaries on the Gospels, so I thought I'd look up what he said. And he wrote this:

The name of the priest does not correspond to 1 Samuel 21:1-9 names him as Ahimelech, who was the father of Abiathar who features prominently in David's subsequent story. There was apparently some confusion over these names, since Abiathar generally appears as David's priest along with Zadok, and yet the lists in 2 Samuel 8:17, 1 Chronicles 24:6 give Ahimelech, son of Abiathar, as the priest along with Zadok.

Let me break in here. Even in the Old Testament, there appears to be some variance here. Mark seems to share that confusion. France says:

Abiathar was presumably there at the time (cf. 1 Sa. 22:20 for his subsequent escape from Nob), but he was not yet [high priest].

Now France has a footnote and I think, for me, this is the interesting part. He footnotes Maurice Casey, who was an Aramaic specialist and New Testament scholar, and Casey suggested that Mark's Greek derives from an Aramaic original, which he reconstructs as:

...in the days of Abiathar – a great or a chief priest...

The Aramaic referred to his lifetime, not the fact that he would have been the high priest at the time, but Mark's Greek has mistakenly made it refer to his period in office. Casey, when he says that, he says, "This is a normal mistake in a bilingual text," at least in his experience working with bilingual texts.

Now we have to say that there is no evidence that Mark was written in Aramaic. There is no evidence that any of the gospels was written originally in Aramaic, but Matthew and Mark are the leading candidates in that discussion. It would make sense on a number of grounds if it were originally in Aramaic. And if it was, then you would have someone convert it to Greek along the way. And it would be at the moment when the Aramaic was converted to Greek that you would have this difficulty surface in the text based upon how the Greek was handled—how

the Greek was put in relationship to the Aramaic. So it's at least another possibility, but it is speculative.

So this is one of those incidents where there are possible solutions to it, both internally and externally, when it comes to text and translations, but nobody can say for sure what the resolution is.

So that all extends far beyond something as simple or simplistic as saying Jesus just goofed, because, again, if that was the case, you'd wonder why it was even included. When I say it that way, I'm just speaking in human terms if you were Mark. You know, why would this be an inclusion? And since it is included and the Pharisees don't respond with, "Ah, you made a mistake, Jesus," chances are good that originally Jesus did not make this mistake and we have a textual explanation for it later on. So that's typically how scholars treat the subject, and I think the treatment there is reasonable. But again, nobody knows for sure. So it's just one of these instances where you have a problem but you only have possible solutions. You don't have anything that you can really land on and be sure about it. You're just in the realm of the possibilities.

TS: Our next question is from Jessica in Charleston, South Carolina.

13:10

The phrase "lift up your eyes" appears a lot. I think it usually signifies when the Lord has given a gift or a blessing or something very directly and maybe has something to do with His presence or maybe the presence of the divine. I'm also sort of wondering if it has something to do with prayer.

MS: Yeah, I mean, it does occur a lot, and there are contexts where it occurs where God is part of the scene (he is one of the actors in the scene). So you could have a blessing or something like that or connect it with a prayer that is being said. So that's going to happen in the text, but I think Jessica may be getting this idiom confused with another. And the other one is to "lift up the face"—lift up the face or lift up your countenance. That one does denote blessing much more overtly. To lift up someone's face or to tell them that they should have their face lifted up is often associated with some kind of good news or a blessing or something like that. So that's a little bit different than "lift up your eyes." As far as I know, "lift up your eyes" means just "take a look and see" or "behold"—something like that.

TS: Grayson has our next question.

14:30

When Moses was married to the Ethiopian woman and Miriam and Aaron speak against him, what does this story mean? Is it saying that we should tell people who to marry, or how do you interpret it?

15:00

MS: Yeah, well, there's certainly nothing that grows out of it textually that makes it a command for anybody other than... I'll put it this way. The passage in question is Numbers 12, and it's a criticism of Moses because of the *possible* (it's not definite, but the possible) foreign ethnicity of the woman. It actually isn't clear whether this woman is a second wife from Ethiopia (Cush) or Moses' original wife, Zipporah, who was from Midian. That is actually not clear. It depends how you understand Cush. So let me read a little bit from Milgrom's commentary on the book of Numbers. This is the *Jewish Publication Society Series*. He writes:

Those who claim that Cush is Ethiopia clearly cannot identify the woman with his wife Zipporah. They cite an elaborate legend of how Moses had married an Ethiopian. Others, however, place Cush in the Midianite territory (based on Habakkuk 3:7) or understand Cushite as an adjective meaning beautiful, thus allowing for the identification with Zipporah. That the marriage with Zipporah, consummated so much earlier (Exodus 2:21), would cause such a belated shock can be explained by the fact that her husband had left her behind when he went to Egypt to redeem his people, and she only rejoined him at Sinai, to be seen for the first time by the Israelites (Exodus 18:5-6). So regardless of whether Moses' wife was Ethiopian or Midianite, the objection to her, it is implied, was ethnic.

That's the end of the Milgrom quote. So there is an issue here of when you say "who to marry." You were supposed to marry within the tribes of Israel. And so there could be some issue here with marrying either a Midianite (that would be Zipporah) or marrying a second woman from Cush (Ethiopia), but whether the Cushite woman is the second wife or not is actually not clear.

TS: Our last question is from Elizabeth.

16:55

As Dr. Heiser reveals the book of Hebrews to us, there came up a discussion in regards to Wisdom (as feminine). So in Luke 7:31-35, Jesus himself states, "But, Wisdom is vindicated by all her children." Is it fair to say that Jesus, The Son of Man, is referring to himself as one of Wisdom's children? Is it possible that the Father God and Mother Wisdom begot The Word, (who created all things) as one of Her children?

MH: Yeah, I would say, no. Jesus wasn't spawned by Father God and Mother Wisdom. For those of you who this is a totally new discussion... Wisdom, Lady Wisdom, The Wisdom Figure, I would just suggest you go to www.thedivinecouncil.com (that's my website). And on the right-hand side, I have a short list of papers that I did on different subjects. There's one called "Jesus and the Wisdom Figure of Proverbs 8" that I would recommend that you read. Back in Proverbs 8 and all the wisdom language in Proverbs... There are a couple references in Job as well. This has nothing to do with procreation. The procreation language is not used in Luke 7. I'll read that in a moment, but

generally this kind of stuff has nothing to do with an actual mother and a father and actual procreation. Wisdom is referred to as Lady Wisdom because of grammar. In lots of languages... If you had Spanish or French or German or Latin in high school or Greek or whatever, you know that words get genders. They get grammatical genders, and that is to match up nouns and verbs correctly. English is not like this. English is a word-order driven language. We don't have endings on our nouns and our verbs necessarily. I mean, there are some exceptions, but we don't generally have that in terms of how to align correctly for a speaker or a hearer, "what nouns go with what verbs?" Other languages do, and Hebrew does as well.

20:00 So in Hebrew the word for wisdom (*chokma*) is grammatically feminine. So when *chokma* is referred to as a person or personified in the literature, the pronouns that are going to go with *chokma* (with wisdom) are going to be feminine—her, hers, she, that sort of thing. And so that's why when you read in some of the early chapters of Proverbs and, of course, Proverbs 8—pretty much the whole chapter... But none of this has anything to do with actual procreation, as though wisdom was a procreative-capable being or something like that. Those of you who have followed my content for a while, you know that wisdom for me is part of the Two Yahweh's phenomenon—that you have two Yahweh figures and, of course, in the Old Testament you have hints of a third. This is where trinitarianism actually comes from when you get into The New Testament. And I discussed this in some detail in *Unseen Realm*, but again, the paper at thedivinecouncil.com will cover it more thoroughly. But you have a situation here where you're dealing with grammar, not with actual procreation. Now I'm going to read Luke 7:31-35 just so the listeners can get this in their heads and then I'll say a few things about it.

Jesus is the speaker here.

³¹ "To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? ³² They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another,

**"We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.'**

³³ For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' ³⁴ The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' ³⁵ Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."

So that's the passage. I mean, there's no procreation language in there, and scholars are actually disagreed in that passage on where the line comes from—where verse 35 comes from. Some think it is alluding to a Second Temple wisdom text because in intertestamental literature you get plenty of talk about wisdom—the Lady Wisdom figure. Other scholars don't think that Jesus is alluding to a wisdom text in this passage, so there's a disagreement there. I think Jesus may be alluding to a text known as *The Wisdom of Solomon* in chapter 7. I'll read you verses 22-27. This is from the Lexham English Septuagint and this is about wisdom. So just listen and you'll... At the end of it, there's a phrase that sounds a little bit like Luke 7:35, so there may be a connection. But again, other scholars think that no, he's not actually alluding to this anyway. So the passage reads:

For in her is a spirit that is intelligent, holy,
 unique, manifold, gentle,
 movable, clear, undefiled,
 distinctive, invulnerable, loving goodness, sharp,
 unhindered, beneficent, ²³ humane,
 steady, secure, free from care,
 all powerful, overseeing all,
 and penetrating through all spirits
that are intelligent, pure, gentle.

²⁴ For wisdom is more mobile than any motion;
 and she pervades and penetrates everything because of her purity.

²⁵ For she is the breath of the power of God
 and the emanation of the pure glory of the Almighty;
 because of this nothing defiled creeps into her.

²⁶ For she is the brightness of the eternal light,
 and the spotless mirror of the activity of God,
 and the image of his goodness.

²⁷ But although she is one, she is able to do all things;
 and although she remains in herself, she renews all things;
 and although she enters into holy souls [in all generations],
 she makes them to be friends of God and to be prophets.

Now it's this last line about making people friends of God and to be prophets that Jesus might be alluding to this text for. The point would be that Wisdom's children in Luke would be the people who are wise and receive Jesus and John the Baptist, not Jesus himself. So it could be. This is from Fitzmyer's Luke commentary. He writes:

Wisdom is here personified [MH: in Luke 7]. She sends out her messengers like prophets, and they are rejected," (see *Wisdom* 7:27).

So he thinks, again, that that last verse has something to do with this.

Both John and Jesus arrive as such on the Palestinian scene with a critical, eschatological message, and what they announce, heard at first as insane and offensive, turns out to be the mark of Wisdom.

In other words, they're right.

The people of this generation turn out to be not the children of Wisdom, but sulking spoilsports who fail to recognize her.

So that's the end of the Fitzmyer quote. It could be... Again like I said, scholars disagree whether this is part of what is known as Wisdom Christology or not in this passage, but there's a chance that Jesus could have been alluding to this passage. But if he is, then interpretively he is referring to it negatively. He is using it to take a jab at the people who are rejecting him and John the Baptist.

Now I want to say one more thing. I want to go back to this Wisdom passage that I read. Verse 26:

She is the brightness of the eternal light, and the spotless mirror of the activity of God, and the image of his goodness.

25:00

This "brightness of the eternal light description" gets picked up in the book of Hebrews for the radiance of the Son—of Jesus himself. So it would be difficult for Jesus to be spawned by Wisdom if Jesus was equated with the Wisdom figure elsewhere in the New Testament. Paul refers to Jesus as the Wisdom of God in one of the Corinthian letters, but Hebrews is the most overt reference, because this word here in the Greek text is *apaugasma*, and the only places this word is ever found are in this passage in Wisdom of Solomon and in Hebrews 1:3. So it's very clear that the writer of Hebrews is saying that the Son is this figure. The Son, Jesus, is the Wisdom of God. He is the radiance. This is how Hebrews puts it, of the glory of God.

So that would make it an awfully convoluted thing to import Wisdom back into chapter 7:35 in the sense of spawning Jesus or something like that. Typically, again, those of us who are into or interested in Wisdom Christology, we typically have the second person of the Godhead (that we know as Christians as the Son)... The second person of the Godhead in the Old Testament is a figure like the Angel of the Lord or Wisdom or the Word of the Lord or something like that, where God shows up in the form of a man or personified in human form generally. So by the time you get the New Testament, that second person of the Trinity has decided—has chosen—to become a man incarnate in Christ. So you have the second person figure of the Godhead and it has Old Testament roots.

Again, I argue this at length in *Unseen Realm*. But it has Old Testament roots, but the way it plays out in the New Testament both imbibes... It connects back to the Old Testament, and also you have the uniqueness of the incarnation to express it in the New Testament as well. So that's how I would answer that question.

TS: Alright, Mike. That's all we have for this week's episode. We appreciate everybody who has sent in those questions and, again, you can e-mail me your questions at treysticklin@gmail.com. You can get my correct spelling of my last name on nakedbiblepodcast.com. And with that, Mike, we appreciate you answering our questions. And I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.