

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 428

Q&A 54

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Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- Was the stopping of the sun in Joshua 10 related to an ancient Near Eastern astrological omen text? [Time stamp 1:10]
- What are your thoughts on the idea that we only need faith that God will heal us or that he will give prosperity if we have faith? [8:00]
- Do demons or spiritual beings have the power to put thoughts into believers' minds? [11:00]
- Do Isaiah 9:6 and Isaiah 52 describe Jesus? [13:35]
- What things "in heaven" were reconciled through Jesus, as described in Colossians 1:20?

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 428: Our 54th Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you feeling?

MH: Oh, you know, so-so.

TS: Yeah.

MH: Like I said, we'll get through it. Not every day can be as good as other days so...

TS: Yeah. Well, we certainly appreciate you taking your time out to answer our questions because I know you're doing other things.

MH: Oh sure. Yeah, the podcast is at least something I can look forward to.

TS: Alright, well, good deal. It's a good excuse then, I guess.

MH: Yeah.

TS: For me too. I enjoy it. So I look forward to it. Alright, Mike, well, why don't we just jump in here with Nathan? He asks:

1:10

Do you have any information on Joshua 10, when Joshua prays that God would stop the sun? There seems to be lots of debate on this, and I have come across John Walton's view that it may be related to an ancient Near Eastern astrological omen text. I'm not a scholar and cannot seem to find enough resources to determine if this view is accurate in the Ancient Near Eastern context or if it is just speculative. Have you heard of this idea and can you shed some light on it?

MH: Yeah, I've heard of it. It is speculative, but other things that could be said about it would be speculative, as well—about other interpretations. So it's certainly possible this could be related to some sort of omen language. For those who are interested, Walton does have an article entitled "Joshua 10:12-15 in Mesopotamian Celestial Omen Texts" and it's in the book titled *Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context*, and that is edited by Millard, Hoffmeier, and Baker. So if you had that resource, you could go look up the article. This is one option, again, that maybe there is some kind of omen that Joshua is praying for that the Lord would do something. Whether that means it is an eclipse or some other celestial phenomenon, we have to speculate. So that's the speculative part of it. There are texts of this nature where some military context will be calling for a celestial omen to favor or go against the enemy and stuff like this. So there is certainly a parallel context for it, but there's probably not enough in Joshua itself to make that correlation secure, but it can certainly be argued for us. It's a possibility.

Another possibility is to argue that this is not necessarily an omen text or anything like this, but it is a prayer against the foreign gods, the gods of Canaan. And this is usually defended on the basis of Habakkuk 3. So in Habakkuk 3 we read... I'll start in verse 3.

³ God came from Teman,
and the Holy One from Mount Paran. *Selah*
His splendor covered the heavens,
and the earth was full of his praise.
⁴ His brightness was like the light;
rays flashed from his hand;
and there he veiled his power.

Now this is a key verse here:

**⁵ Before him went pestilence,
and plague followed at his heels.**

So the word “pestilence” in that verse (this is verse 5) is *dever* and the word translated “plague” that follows it is *resheph*. *Dever* and *resheph* are also names of ancient Canaanite deities. So you could have this idea here of these other deities following at the heels of Yahweh, like whimpering puppies or whatever. Verse 6 says:

**⁶ He stood and measured the earth;
he looked and shook the nations;
then the eternal mountains were scattered;
the everlasting hills sank low.
His were the everlasting ways.**

**⁷ I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction;
the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.**

**⁸ Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD?
Was your anger against the rivers,
or your indignation against the sea,
when you rode on your horses,
on your chariot of salvation?**

5:00 Let me just stop there. This is very 8. “Rivers” is *nahar* and “sea” is the word *yam*. Both of these are also Canaanite deities. Verse 9:

**⁹ You stripped the sheath from your bow,
calling for many arrows.
You split the earth with rivers.**

**¹⁰ The mountains saw you and writhed;
the raging waters swept on;
the deep gave forth its voice;
it lifted its hands on high.**

And here’s verse 11.

**¹¹ The sun and moon stood still in their place
at the light of your arrows as they sped,
at the flash of your glittering spear.**

We'll just stop there. So there's this reference to the sun and moon standing in their place, amidst this other part of this poem in Habakkuk 3 that have the gods of Canaan in subservient roles (lesser roles, lesser status than the god of Israel—than Yahweh). The whole point of this teaching is that the forces of plague and pestilence and whatever else these gods are supposed to be ruling over... They don't actually have these powers. These powers belong to Yahweh. So these gods are shown to be in submission to Yahweh in this passage. And there are other passages like this, too, in the Old Testament where some other foreign god is cast in a subservient light, and I think that's the best way to put it.

So if this is true with these other deity names; plague, pestilence, rivers, *sea*, *yam*, *nahar*, *dever*, *resheph*... If it's true here (if this is how to read the text here—that this is essentially a statement of spiritual superiority), then maybe when in verse 11 in Habakkuk he gets to the sun and the moon standing place, maybe that's to mark out *shamesh* or *shamash* (deity name, also the word for the sun) and *yareakh* or *yarikh* (also a deity name). So maybe what Joshua is praying for in Joshua 10 is for God to have victory over the other gods of Canaan and not literally stop the sun and the moon.

So again, this is how the viewpoint is argued on the basis of Habakkuk 3, this parallel text. It seems pretty clearly to be a parallel—the sun and moon are right there. This is how this viewpoint is typically argued for, as opposed to something astronomical, but Walton's other idea of celestial omens just more broadly could also be in view, too. But again, these are speculations, and you have to judge which ones are more textually rooted than others. You know, God can certainly do what he wants in the physical world, but is that the right way to read Joshua 10? Again, there's disagreement there as the questioner noted.

TS: Rose in Minnesota has a question about the prosperity in faith teachings.

8:00

What are your thoughts on the idea that we only need faith that God will heal us to get healing or that he will provide for all our needs? That He will give us prosperity as we have faith in Him?

MH: Yeah, I don't think very much of it. As far as you might want to know, what do they do with passages like 1 Timothy 5:23. where Paul can't heal Timothy? He knows Timothy has a problem with his stomach. He tells him to take some wine for his stomach's sake. Paul couldn't heal himself from the thorn in the flesh. He has to ask three times and, of course, the answer was no on each of those cases. If we were all automatically healed by the work on the cross, then these passages shouldn't even come up. Paul should never have been afflicted with the thorn in the flesh. Timothy should never have gotten sick. Nobody should ever get sick—no Christian, because we're already healed. Well, again, I think that's nonsense. I think it's really overreading the passage. The healing in passages like Isaiah ("by his stripes we are healed") is metaphorical and spiritual.

10:00 There is no rule against using words like “healing” to speak metaphorically or figuratively, and that’s what’s going on here. Again, when Jesus runs into people who are sick, not only doesn’t he heal them all, but he never accuses them of doing something wrong as to why they’re sick. There may be one or two cases where what he says to them you might wonder, but he heals people. He doesn’t blame them for their situation, or he doesn’t promise that “Once I die, everybody’s going to get healed.” Nothing of the sort. So I think it’s really dramatically overreading the text. If you think about it in real life, then this means that no Christian should ever be able to break a bone. No Christian should ever suffer the loss of an eye or a limb or a single digit on the finger. That doesn’t make any sense. That’s like if I accidentally saw off my finger, it’s going to grow back because I’m a Christian. “By his strips I’m healed.” Again, I think very little of “word of faith” in these kinds of teachings because they’re demonstrably unscriptural, and in some cases they’re just downright wacky and they’re demonstrably untrue by real life. So beyond that, again, I’d probably get a little meaner and I don’t want to get mean here, but again, I think this is very misleading and harms people.

TS: Gary asks.

11:00 **Do demons or spiritual beings have the power to put thoughts into believers’ minds?**

MH: Yeah, we don’t have much to go on here. This is actually somewhat discussed in my *Demons* book. I have a little in the Q&A in the *Demons* book. There’s a question there about, “Can demons read minds?” and that question... I’ll just go read what I put there because it’ll segue into this.

The question about whether demons can read minds usually arises from presumptions we have about consciousness and its relationship to supernatural beings. The fact that angels appear to people in dreams and visions (Matthew 1:20, Matthew 2:13 and 19, Acts 10:3) seems to suggest that supernatural beings can tap into one’s mind. The assumption is that since evil spirits are fallen angels, the Satan and demons have the ability to “occupy space” in the human mind. That angels in the New Testament instructed people through such means is not evidence of mind reading though.

So I don’t think they can read minds.

If anything, such incidents describe the transmission of information, not reading minds. Such incidents could, of course, influence human behavior and might conceivably be a line of demonic oppression.

Is it possible for Satan or a demon to put something into somebody’s mind? I think the answer to that is yes. Dreams would be a peripheral way of illustrating

that, but having said that, having at least allowed it for angels, there is no scriptural example of Satan or an evil spirit appearing to somebody in a dream. As such, it is impossible to make a scriptural statement for some sort of demonic influence over the mind. Again, this is all you've got, which isn't much—that angels can influence people through their mental states including sleep. But does that mean that Satan and demons do that? Are they allowed to do that by God? We don't have any indication that God does allow it. We know that for the other side (the angels), this is possible. So maybe it's possible for them to influence people this way or maybe this is part of possession or oppression or something like that, but we're just not told. So we have very little to go on here.

13:35 **TS:** Leroy says:

I watched a video that Dr. Heiser did concerning “The Post Christian Future.” In that video, he eloquently showed, using Biblical text, how the Apostle Paul called the gospel a mystery because it was hidden from them. My question is: Does Isaiah 9:6 describe Jesus, and also Isaiah 52 with emphasis on verse 14?

MH: Yeah, I think it does. I think both of those verses do describe the suffering Messiah who is Jesus, and the reigning Messiah, who is Jesus. That would be Isaiah 9:6. I don't think there is much of a relationship between them, but yeah, I do think that this is the case for both of them. So I'm not sure. That seems to be the only question that was asked here. So I'll just leave it at that.

TS: Adam has our last question.

14:30 **In Colossians 1:20, Paul says God was pleased “...through him [Jesus] to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.” We know that humanity has been offered reconciliation “on earth,” but what things “in heaven” is he talking about reconciling?**

15:00 **MH:** Yeah, this is actually in the *Angels* book. This is why the books are written—so that we can cover questions like this at length. But let me just pull a few things out for the sake of this episode.

Most scholars would acknowledge that “all things, whether on earth or in heaven,” in Colossians in this verse (in verse 20) includes the heavenly host. Okay? This is usually where this comes up in the question. So in light of that assumption, the issue that requires consideration is the meaning of “reconcile” and “making peace” through the cross. Most readers presume that this language refers to the forgiveness of sins, but that is not necessarily the case, and really not the case here. This comes up when I get the question, “Can fallen angels be redeemed?” The answer to that is no, according to Hebrews 2, and I don't think

that is contradicted by Colossians 1:20. You have to read in the idea of forgiveness of sins to reconciliation, which in some contexts may be in view and other contexts is not in view. The idea of reconciliation is multifaceted. For example, the work of Christ here in Colossians 1 is connected to the renewal of creation in other passages. That has nothing to do with forgiveness of sins. The creation didn't sin, okay? The planet didn't sin. So the reconciliation talked about there has nothing to do with forgiveness of sins.

So that is just a way of pointing out that the terminology itself has no inherent relationship to the forgiveness of sins or healing some moral offense or whatever. If you take a look at the verse in Greek (and again, I'm trying to skip around through what I have in the book here)... The book does this much better than I'm doing it here. In Colossians 1:20 you have

...through him to reconcile [MH: and the verb form is aorist] to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven making peace [MH: and there you have another aorist participle in this case] by the blood of his cross.

Aorist tenses for verbal forms in Greek... We have an infinitive here and a participle in this verse. Those grammatically have to do with completed time or past time, not to time in progress or a time yet unfulfilled. It has nothing to do with the future. So really, the verse is saying that "through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, having made peace..." This is already a reality by the blood of his cross. What you're going to find out is this reconciliation talk... Again, if you read what I have in the book here, it is part of the already-but-not-yet. This is already true, but not yet, and it has to do with wider creation. I will read one quotation from one scholar here. It says:

The Greek *Eis auton* (to him) here does not indicate the completion of "imminent" reconciliation, and thus does not indicate a futuristic occurrence. The expression, which is construed in the aorist tense, "all things are reconciled *with him*," is to be interpreted as a parallel construction to the expression in stanza 1 (that's Colossians 1:16). "All things were created in him," and were created in him. It's past tense idea. Accordingly, reconciliation has its foundation in the creation and is now arriving at its completion in the dominion of the Son over all things. [Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke in Anchor-Yale]

The point is that the statements in Colossians 1:16 ("for by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible") must be understood in tandem with Colossians 1:20 ("through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven"). Both statements are in the same paragraph unit and both verbs are in aorist tense. The Greek tense (which focuses on completed action, not action in process, or action yet unaccomplished), therefore— the reconciliation of Colossians 1:20 (which we haven't defined yet)

is rooted in creation, and now after the cross is moving toward consummation, which itself is expressed as the dominion of the Son over all things.

20:00

So again, I discussed this at length in the book, but basically what's in view in Colossians 1:20 is a cosmic reset back to the original creation of all things, both in heaven and on earth. In other words, when the new earth is consummated, when everything is said and done and the heaven on earth (the new earth) is here and has been realized, that state is going to be just like Eden was, both in terms of the physical earth and also in terms of things invisible, which would include the heavenly host. There is going to be no rebellion, okay? There is going to be no sin, no rebellion. It is, again, being restored to a pristine Edenic state, and that is what the reconciliation is about. It is not about the forgiveness of either angels' sins or the earth's sins. One is denied by Hebrews 2, and the other one makes no sense because the earth is an inanimate object. Again, so that's really what it's referring to when you get to the things invisible. It's the heavenly host. But the idea is that the heavenly host is restored to what it originally was before there was any rebellion. So it's not talking about restoration or forgiveness, because again, that's specifically denied in Hebrews 2. Jesus became a man to affect the plan of salvation. He didn't become an angel. The incarnation is linked specifically and intrinsically to the plan of redemption, the incarnation. It's for humans, not for nonhumans. It's human images, not the other ones. But anyway, the point is that reconciling all things whether in heaven or on earth in Colossians 1:20 refers to the restoration of creation order and authority just generally.

TS: Alright, Adam, you can go buy the book. That's our official answer. So everybody else that wants to know about angels being forgiven and stuff, go buy the book. Right, Mike? It's been a hot topic for many years.

MH: Yeah, there's a lot in there on it.

TS: Yeah, alright. Alright, well, we appreciate everybody sending in those questions. Again, keep sending me those questions at treystricklin@gmail.com. Mike, we appreciate you answering our questions and with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.