

## **Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**

### **Episode 430**

### **John Walton on Demons and Spirits**

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### **Episode Summary**

Over the past two years Dr. Heiser has been asked a number of times to respond to the book *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology: Reading the Biblical Text in its Cultural and Literary Context*, by John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton (2019). The book runs quite contrary to Dr. Heiser's own work. In this episode Dr. Heiser responds to the book's content and how he fears it might be used by opponents of the faith.

### **Transcript**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 430: John Walton on *Demons and Spirits*. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

**MH:** Oh, not too bad this week. It's been a decent week. *Stranger Things* week.

**TS:** Yeah, yeah, we were talking about you're almost finished with it. You've got one or two to go and I've got like three episodes to go so what's your take on it so far?

**MH:** I think it's good. Not up to the level of the first 3 seasons, but it's good. A little too much [audio breaks up]. I don't know why they amp that up, but other than that, those are my thoughts.

**TS:** Yeah.

**MH:** I don't want to give anything away.

**TS:** Yeah, yeah, it's hard not to give it away, but my son, Jax, he manned up. So we watched all the seasons. We got to season 4, and I was nervous with all the feedback people were saying about how scary it is, but I think it was okay. Of course, I grew up in the 80s during the slasher movies, so I guess I'm more hardened, battle-tested.

**MH:** Yeah, I never watched any of those.

**TS:** Yeah.

**MH:** Like *Nightmare on Elm Street*...

**TS:** Oh yeah.

**MH:** ... or *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*. I never cared to watch any of them.

**TS:** Oh my gosh, I was like...

**MH:** So I can't pick out the references.

**TS:** I had a full-size Freddy Krueger poster on my door as a little kid. So I loved it. So I don't know what that says, but that's the way it was.

**MH:** Gosh. It doesn't say anything good.

**TS:** Mike, we want to remind people Lexham Press is doing that *Stranger Things* discount so you can get your book for \$5. You go to [nakedbiblepodcast.com](http://nakedbiblepodcast.com) website and get that discount code or link to buy your book.

**MH:** Yeah.

**TS:** Because that's still going on through the whole month of June so...

**MH:** Yeah.

**TS:** Well, Mike, we're switching gears here. We are finally... You're going to tackle John Walton's book on demons.

**MH:** Yeah.

**TS:** I know that we've talked about it for a while, but one of my gripes... I don't know, I'm really frustrated out there with scholars. I know John Walton is not the only one, but I guess the criticism of the supernatural view, like the divine council aren't *elohim* or whatever, they are humans, and just the whole supernatural element—that the humans are the lower “g” gods...

**MH:** Yeah.

**TS:** They're not really *real* gods; they're just made-up stuff.

**MH:** The text doesn't say what it says.

**TS:** Yeah.

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**MH:** It doesn't really say what you're reading.

**TS:** The people at the time just made up those gods and they're not really real and things like that, but yet they'll turn around and believe supernatural elements like a virgin birth, the resurrection, things like that. So I find it frustrating for me personally that scholars (and people in general) will pick and choose what supernatural element they're going to believe in.

**MH:** Yeah, I would say don't... Definitely you don't want to read Walton's book. I mean, this is sort of a depressing enterprise because on the one hand, I consider John a friend and I will continue to recommend a lot of his work, but this book I cannot recommend at all. So we'll devote an episode to it and explain why.

**TS:** Well, I'm all ears, Mike.

**MH:** Alright, well, as you and I have talked about this, over the past couple years, I've been asked a number of times to respond to the book *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology: Reading the Biblical Text in Its Cultural and Literary Context*. And this is by John Walton and his son, J. Harvey Walton. It's a 2019 title. And the reason that people have asked me to respond to it is pretty straightforward: I've written five bestselling books on the subject matter. One of them is sort of to a popular audience (that would be the *Supernatural* book), but the other four are *The Unseen Realm*, *Reversing Hermon*, my book on *Angels*, and my book on *Demons*. Those are academic in flavor. So I've spent a lot of time on this and so it's very normal for people to ask me to respond to this particular book. The people who have done so (who have asked for my response to the Waltons) have done so because of the overt skepticism that runs through the book in regard to supernatural entities. It's very palpable. The Waltons are basically evangelical skeptics when it comes to the Bible teaching anything meaningful about the spiritual world. And what I'm going to do here is not so much respond to the Waltons as dialog with their audience. That said, the questions I will raise here are just as much for the Waltons as anyone else inclined toward accepting their positions in this book. And I'll be raising questions that are avoided by the authors (studiously avoided), but which must be answered for the sake of clarity and congruence and, honestly, just plain old honesty.

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The short version is that, like I've already said, I can't recommend the book. And for those of you who are used to me recommending Walton, that would be a surprise, but you'll find out quickly why I would never recommend this book. I think it's actually a dangerous work because it arms unbelieving skeptics. It really does equip them to undermine the faith of believers. And I don't think for a minute that the Waltons have that as an aim, but it is a very transparent consequence of the book, as we will see.

As I thought about this, I thought, how do I want to do this? And I think it's a good idea, just so that you know it isn't just me, to start this episode by reading from a review of somebody else—somebody else's review of the Walton's book. And this somebody else is Thomas Farrar. Farrar's review of the book appeared in the *Journal of Theological Studies* published by Oxford University Press. I'll be reading from the author's original version which is accessible online. So you can just google the last name "Farrar" and then "Walton" and then "demons and spirits" and you'll find that review.

Farrar's review is one of two reviews of the book that I can find. So the book has not received much attention at all. I was surprised by that. No evangelical journal has reviewed it (at least that I can find), and I've searched the mainstream evangelical journals by virtue of the databases that we all use and come up empty. Farrar's review (as well as one other one in *Religious Studies Review*) is generally positive, but it contains important pushback, and that's why I want to start with him, again, so you know it's not just me.

So we'll start with his review and then pick our way back through that review to camp on specific problems for the Waltons' work. And it has fundamental flaws, I have to be honest with you. It's one of the strangest books I've ever read, just because of what it claims and overclaims. It's very strange to read something like this. And I've wondered if the reason that evangelical journals have not reviewed it is because it's so nonevangelical. But that usually doesn't stop evangelical reviewers from reviewing a book. But again, the book has garnered almost no attention, which on the other side of it, I think is good because I do think it's harmful.

But anyway, let's just start with Farrar and I'm going to read through most of this review (it's not a long review) and then just jump back into it with my own interactions. So this is, again, a review of Walton's *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology*, which is by John Walton and his son, J. Harvey Walton, and it's published by Wipf and Stock. Wipf and Stock is not an evangelical publisher, although it's friendly to evangelical authors. They more or less publish anything. They have a huge, huge selection of books. And you'll find a lot of good stuff there and you'll find stuff that's just on the periphery as well, but that's the nature of their business and that's fine. So Farrar starts his review this way. He says:

John H. and J. Harvey Walton address the subject of biblical demonology by dialoguing with two widespread interpretive approaches: Demythologizing and conflict theology. Their primary aim is to critique the latter.

That is, conflict theology. That's what they really have in their crosshairs. Farrar says:

Their primary aim is to critique the latter, a position associated with conservative evangelical theology that affirms the real, personal existence of demons and Satan and interprets biblical references to these entities as a system of propositional truths and instructions for spiritual warfare.

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Let me just stop there. I mean, that much would be me. Okay? I accept the personal existence of demons and Satan and I do think the Bible teaches us propositional truths about what demons and Satan do and what they are by nature, their activities, and so on and so forth. The Waltons are going to object to that, like right out of the gate. Again, it's a very strange thing for an evangelical scholar to be writing. The book is not about me. It's not a response to me. I'm barely mentioned in the book. It's more or less that they spend their time critiquing conflict theology which is, again, a theology that accepts Satan and demons as real and the Bible actually teaches us stuff about them. That's what they're shooting at. And most of the time they're shooting at Pentecostalism or Greg Boyd. They're not shooting at me. So I think we need to make that clear. So back to Farrar. Farrar writes:

Their secondary aim is to propose a methodology for Biblical theology that "prioritizes the importance of the text in context."

And again, I would say I'm doing the same thing. Farrar says:

In their view, the Bible refers to demons, not to affirm anything about their nature or existence, but because they are part of the "cognitive environment" (cultural setting) shared by author and audience and thus a useful vehicle for conveying meaning.

The study is divided into four parts (though the Part 4 heading is absent from the table of contents). Part 1 lays out the authors' hermeneutic. Observing that the cosmic geography presupposed by biblical writers (featuring a solid sky, for instance) is untenable today, they infer that biblical statements on cosmic geography should not be interpreted as factual truths. The interpreter's task is therefore not to reconstruct the biblical authors' assumptions in order to adopt them, but to examine the text-in-context and so arrive at "the information that the text was written to convey" (p. 14). This, they argue, is as true for demonology as for cosmic geography.

Let me just stop there. So what the Waltons are doing is they're saying since we can't accept what the Bible says about cosmology (solid sky, the dome over the earth and all that stuff—three-tiered universe)... Since we can't accept that as being real, we don't have to accept what the Bible says about demons or Satan as real either. And you think, well, that's quite a jump. Yeah, it is, and that will be something we're going to park on. Back to Farrar. Farrar writes:

A central methodological claim is that the Bible does not affirm the content of references to its cognitive environment. Thus, since “all of the Bible’s statements about demons or similar creatures” are such references (p. 18), the Bible affirms nothing about the existence or nature of Satan or demons. The rest of Part 1 discusses the various genres of Scripture and their implications for extracting contextualised meaning.

Part 2 opens with a discussion of whether knowledge about demons and spirits can be gained from outside the Bible. The authors accuse conflict theologians of a double standard by arguing that demonology is outside the jurisdiction of science and yet adducing empirical evidence of demonological phenomena. They further argue that, even if demons exist, biblical references to them are no more an authority on demonology than biblical references to ostriches are on zoology.

**I’m going to read that sentence again.**

**Ferrar writes:**

[The Waltons] further argue that even if demons exist, biblical references to them are no more an authority on demonology than biblical references to ostriches are on zoology. They then offer detailed background on spirit beings in the Bible’s cognitive environment(s), focusing especially on “class II” spirits that are neither gods (class I) nor deceased humans (class III).

**Let me just interject here again. That’s a scheme that the Waltons have made up—this typology. Okay?**

In Part 3—the longest section—the authors attend to the biblical data about demons and spirits. The material is broken down by chapters into divine combat, the serpent, demons and idolatry, evil gods and angels, the fall of Satan, and demons and spirits in the church age. The argument throughout is that the biblical text references ideas from the cognitive environment, not to affirm them but to convey some other meaning.

**So again, interjecting, the Bible mentions demons and Satan and gods (and so on and so forth) not to affirm that they’re real or that the Bible is teaching anything about them, but it mentions them to teach something else. Okay?**

**Farrar continues:**

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In Part 4, the authors briefly critique conflict theology on philosophical grounds. They argue that conflict theology hinders rather than helps Christians to defend theism against the argument of the problem of evil as raised by atheists. They also

maintain that conflict theology undermines the inversive Christian love-of-enemy ethic by allowing hostility to be redirected toward the devil.

**So again, apparently we're not supposed to dislike the devil.**

Despite finding no biblical warrant for affirming that demons exist, the authors do not conclude by denying their existence, but instead offer suggestions on how Christians should regard demons.

**So that's the summary of the content from Farrar. Farrar continues and says:**

The book is stylistically fluid and readable, and footnotes are used effectively.

**Blah, blah, blah, so on and so forth.**

The bibliography is adequate; the authors should perhaps have consulted more article-length treatments of specific texts in addition to commentaries and topical works.

**Farrar does comment that the authors sometimes appear unaware of exegetical possibilities proposed in recent literature on certain passages.**

**Again, that's fair. Farrar writes:**

The book's central claim—that the Bible's statements about demons and spirits are referential...

**They're just references. Like Satan and demons are just sort of window dressing. They're actors. If you've ever seen a play, they're the actors that never get names. They're just sort of there, but we never learn anything about them.**

The book's central claim—that the Bible's statements about demons and spirits are referential and do not affirm any information about them—is reasonable as far as the Hebrew Bible is concerned.

**I would disagree with Farrar there. But Farrar says he is in agreement there.**

Here, such entities appear very sparsely and are usually incidental to the writers' contextual purposes. Less convincing are the authors' efforts to extend this claim to the New Testament.

**Believe it or not, the Waltons deny that the *New Testament* (not just the Old Testament, but the New Testament)... They deny the New Testament teaches us anything about Satan and demons. Again, this is why I say this is one of the**

more bizarre things I've ever read. In scholarship, whether it's evangelical scholarship or especially non-evangelical scholarship... Because there are so many scholars that have spent so much time not only on the New Testament, but on Second Temple intertestamental literature on Satan and demons, that it's like all the work doesn't exist to the Waltons. It's just... I mean, I'm going to use a word like "bizarre." It's just truly bizarre, but this is where they're at. Now Farrar says:

Three criticisms are briefly offered in this respect.

So he's going to push back on this point that he just made about the New Testament. He disagrees with the Waltons there.

First, while the New Testament writers' statements about Satan and demons are referential, the suggestion that they merely allude to established ideas without adding anything new (e.g., p. 233) is unfounded. The authors acknowledge that ideas about the devil in the Second Temple Jewish cognitive environment are "non-systematic" (p. 232), but still refer to "the profile of the devil" and "the devil character" from this cognitive environment (pp. 232, 260), and "the Second Temple understanding of what Satan is and does" (p. 265)...

...Given this context, together with the rich variety of terminology and imagery used of the devil by the New Testament writers, it seems that they [MH: the New Testament writers] are not merely alluding to some well-known devil character but contributing or bearing witness to new developments [MH: in the idea of Satan and demons].

Basically (if I can interject here again), what Farrar is saying here is "Look, there's so much in the New Testament about Satan and demons that builds upon what's written in the Second Temple literature. The New Testament writers are very obviously taking Second Temple literature seriously and they're adding to it. They're building upon it. They're contributing something to a doctrine of Satan and demons." But the Waltons would say, "No, there is no such thing." The New Testament teaches us there's no truth content in the New Testament about Satan and demons. Farrar continues:

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Second, texts do not necessarily affirm their references, but they can. For example, scholars have observed that the references to Satan in the Corinthian letters imply that Paul had included ideas about Satan in his elementary instruction when founding this Greek church. He is not referencing an idea from an external cognitive environment but an idea that he himself has taught them. Similarly, both Luke (10:18) and Revelation (12:1-17; 20:1-10) depict Satan within the content of visions. The authors thus establish a revelatory basis for their



references to this figure. In such cases, references do seem to carry the force of affirmation.

**In other words, Farrar is saying, “These passages sure look like they’re teaching us something about Satan and demons.” I would agree, obviously.**

Third, the authors are unjustifiably minimalistic about the theological significance that New Testament writers assign to Satan and demons when referencing these ideas. For instance, they repeatedly insist that passages describing Christ’s conflict with Satan and demons are Christological affirmations and affirm nothing about the diabolical and demonic opponents (e.g., pp. 226, 247, 241)...

**Let me just stop there. So in a passage like Jesus’ confrontation with Satan in the wilderness, the Waltons are saying, “Well, the New Testament there teaches us lots of about Jesus, but it doesn’t teach us anything about Satan.” It’s such clear picking and choosing of the content that, again, it’s so strange. Farrar’s comment is:**

...this seems to posit a false dilemma.

**And again I would agree.**

Similarly, the authors rightly state that the gospels are theological works as opposed to impartial records of events. They infer that exorcism accounts are “not written to report what Jesus did or can do to demons” (p. 240).

**The Waltons would say that exorcism accounts don’t tell us what Jesus can or did do to demons. They don’t tell us anything. It’s just window dressing. Farrar continues:**

However, when an evangelist has Jesus stake the authority of his mission on his exorcisms (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20), the reality of the exorcisms matters.

**Amen. I would agree.**

Besides, the evangelists do assign theological significance to Satan and demons.

**That’s a Walton claim.**

Several parables (strong man, sower, tares) have characters that represent the devil allegorically, and narrative-critical studies of the gospels have identified the devil as a character in their plots.

**Again, Farrar is just pointing out the obvious here.**

Furthermore, the gospels and Acts intend to provide liturgical and behavioural norms for the early Christian communities to which they are addressed. The accounts of exorcisms—especially those performed by Jesus’ disciples—should be read in this light.

**Then he wraps up his review with a final paragraph.**

There are, therefore, some shortcomings in the authors’ treatment of the New Testament. Nonetheless, they have offered a strong biblical-theological critique of a fundamentalist hermeneutic that sees every such reference as a source of propositional truths about the unseen realm and recipes for spiritual warfare. Their book challenges all would-be biblical theologians to be consistent and contextual in their hermeneutics. More than that, it does much to illuminate the contextual background of biblical passages about demons and related ideas.

**So, again, I wanted to start there so that listeners know this isn’t just Mike pushing back and Mike’s not making up the content of the Waltons’ book. Because it’s going to sound really bizarre to your ear. They actually say this stuff in the book. So let us just jump back in here again to this portion of Farrar’s quote where the Waltons address the subject of biblical demonology by dialoging with de-mythologization. We’ll just call it the “liberal” view, where basically none of this is real. And conflict theology. That would be the evangelical side where the Bible actually does teach us something about Satan and demons, and its important content—that the Bible can base propositional truths about Satan and demons in its pages. So you would think they would be hammering away at the liberal stuff, but they’re not. They’re shooting at the evangelical side. Again, Farrar writes:**

Their primary aim is to critique the latter [MH: the conflict theology], a position associated with conservative evangelical theology that affirms the real, personal existence of demons and Satan and interprets biblical references to these entities as a system of propositional truths and instructions for spiritual warfare.

**I mean, that sentence sums up my own approach, my own work. So, I mean, I would be directly in the crosshairs of the Waltons even though, again, their book doesn’t cite my work. They’re not after me. They’re after Greg Boyd and, again, Pentecostalism and evangelical theology in general. So I get caught up in this. So again, this is what they do. Farrar wrote:**

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In their view, the Bible refers to demons, not to affirm anything about their nature or existence, but because they are part of the “cognitive environment”...

**And so these characters (these not-worth-much-of-anything characters) that the authors call Satan and demons... We can’t learn anything about Satan and demons from the biblical authors. But the biblical authors... When they refer to**

them, we can at least learn something else about somebody else, okay? So in other words, any mention of Satan or demons is not intended to teach us anything about Satan and demons, but to teach us some other meaning, something else. In their book, “something else” is truth about God and God’s works, something real broad like that. That’s what the mention of Satan and demons is supposed to teach us, but not anything specific to Satan and demons.

So let us think about this a little bit. What we have here in this book is that we have a situation where we have two authors, again, who would (I presume) lump themselves into evangelicalism. I mean, I have no reason to think that John has abandoned that. I don’t know his son J. Harvey. But what we have is we have a book written by these two guys that asserts that the Bible conveys no truth content about Satan and demons. They are literally a means to some other ends. So the first thing I wonder about is the very incoherence of the title of the book (*Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology*). A biblical theology of Satan and demons? How can you write a biblical theology of Satan and demons if the Bible teaches nothing about Satan and demons? It doesn’t make any sense. The whole title doesn’t make sense. It doesn’t seem a whole lot of thought went into how incongruent the title is.

Second, I certainly wonder how the Waltons (and even the reviewer, Farrar) can conclude there is no element of supernatural conflict in the Old Testament. Well, what about Genesis 3? I mean, Paul and John both get to be wrong then. We’ll get to them in a moment. But again, the Waltons apparently deny any relationship between the serpent and Satan—any relationship at all. I mean, I refer to the villain of Genesis 3 as a comic enemy. I think that the serpent was actually a supernatural being who was real and who opposed God’s programming. Those of you who have read my work, you know this, and that’s not abnormal for evangelical theology.

Now I’m sure that the Waltons say what they say in part because of the *ha-satan* issue—that that’s not really a reference to the devil in Job. But I would say let’s not throw the baby out with the bath water. The “adversary” terminology just came into use later for a figure who opposed God—a supernatural character who opposed God. It’s not rocket science. It’s just an issue of what terms came into use when, not whether there was a supernatural enemy or not. I mean, think about it. If the serpent is only a serpent, what does Genesis 3:15 mean—the bruising of the heel and the crushing of the head and all that stuff? If the villain of Genesis 3 is just a snake, what does Genesis 3:15 mean? And you’re telling me there’s no conflict in Genesis 3:15? It’s ridiculous. Is Genesis 3:15 really only about women and snakes? If there’s a supernatural force involved, why can’t the Waltons just admit that? But instead, they don’t answer that kind of question and they simply proceed to deny any spiritual world conflict theology in the Old Testament and the entire Bible by the time they’re done.

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How about Daniel 10? No conflict in Daniel 10? Daniel's theology of supernatural princes over nations comes from somewhere (it comes from Deuteronomy 32:8-9, Deuteronomy 32:17). And there's a conflict in Daniel 10 between Michael and these other entities. So Daniel (naughty Daniel) is thus caught learning about demonology from his Hebrew Bible and from Deuteronomy 32, which is a sin against what the Waltons are advocating. And even if the Waltons would deny the princes of these nations were supernatural beings (which again puts them at odds with Paul because Paul gets his theology from somewhere—his principalities and powers), it puts them at odds with Deuteronomy 32:8-9. Even if they deny that the princes of these nations were supernatural beings [audio breaks up]... would still affirm Michael as an archangel. But maybe not, because we can't learn anything about Michael from the New Testament and that's where he is called an archangel. But again, you'd still have Michael wrangling with human empires. There's still conflict there. How in the world is there no conflict there? They just dismiss it. They don't raise these questions. These are questions I'm raising. They don't raise these questions in their book and address them. They just dismiss it and move on.

How about Deuteronomy 32:17? This is where the *shedim* are called *elohim* and they seduce the Israelites into worshiping them. So there's no conflict between these gods seducing Israelites to worship them and the true God? There's really no sense of conflict there? Now the default response from the Waltons would have to be, "You know, Mike, you're being silly. You're assuming that the verse has truth content in it." Yeah, I am. Yeah, I am!

How about Deuteronomy 32:43 when the gods are punished? Or Isaiah 34:1-4... No conflict in Isaiah 34:1-4? This is when the heavens are judged and punished—the beings in the heavens, the rulers in the heavens and on earth. For crying out loud, it's the Day of the Lord! How can you have no conflict in the Day of the Lord? Again, I read through this book, and it is one of the strangest things I've ever read.

How about some big picture questions here? If there's no spiritual warfare content in the Old Testament... If that's true, where do Second Temple writers get the idea? Where do Second Temple Jewish writers get the ideas—get the stuff that they are writing about? As Farrar points out, Second Temple literature is filled with conflict material involving Satan and demons, and so is the New Testament. The New Testament is part of Second Temple Jewish literature. The New Testament is in the Second Temple period up to 70 A.D. (or just call it 100 if you want). There's so much conflict material. Where do the Second Temple writers get their ideas from? From nowhere? No, that's obviously not true. They're getting it from their Old Testament. They're interacting with the Hebrew Bible. They are trying to determine what the Hebrew Bible is teaching or saying. So in other words, Second Temple writers would flunk a hermeneutics class if it

was taught by the Waltons because they assume there's actually truth content there. And the New Testament writers are part of that.

Again (and this is where Farrar pushed back for transparently obvious reasons), the Waltons even deny New Testament spiritual conflict, and they do this because they have to. They've said that all that talk about Satan and demons is completely peripheral in the Old Testament; it provides no truth content. They want this to be true in the Old Testament so badly that they've extended the thinking to the whole Bible. Why? Why?

And this is where I say they're operating from a fear-based hermeneutic because having supernatural conflict in the Old Testament means affirming supernatural beings in passages like Genesis 3, in Genesis 6:1-4, in Deuteronomy 32, in Psalm 82, in Psalm 29, in Psalm 89. It's just on and on and on and on. They're so scared by the thought of doing that because for them it means teaching the Bible is like mythology.

See, I understand this fear impulse that governs what the Waltons are doing here because I was once them. I mean, not to this extent. I wouldn't have denied that the New Testament gives us truth content about Satan and demons. I think that's absurd. I mean, I would never have said that, but I would have been with them at one point in my life because it feels too much like mythology. So they're desperate to deny this in the Old Testament. But to be consistent, they realize that they have to deny it in the New Testament as well. This is where they're at.

So if you're a follower of their views, I want answers. On what basis, on what authority are you doing this? Again, their solution is just to deny Old Testament spiritual conflict, but since the New Testament is so full of that kind of thing, they have to either affirm the New Testament against the Old or deny it in the New Testament. They have no answer as to what source the New Testament writers are using for their theology. Where does Paul get his theology about principalities and powers? If not the Old Testament, where does he get it? Where does John get it? Where do the gospel writers get it? Again, if the Old Testament has no truth content, where do the New Testament writers get their ideas? Answer that for me. They either get it from the Old Testament (which would mean the Waltons are wrong), they get it from nowhere (they're just making it up), or they get it from a nonbiblical source. Those are your options. So come on Waltons, where are you at? Where do they get their ideas? You have three choices, one of which cancels out your book and the other two are just patently dangerous, to say they're just making it up. I mean, how do you have a high view of scripture and say something like that? How do you have any sense of the history of doctrine from the Old Testament to the Second Temple period through the New Testament if you say that the New Testament writers are just getting this stuff from external sources—external to the Old Testament, some pagan literature? Those are your three choices, folks, and I want an answer because I know you're

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cornered at this point. Where do the Second Temple Jewish writers get their theology? Where do the New Testament writers get their theology, if not from the Old Testament? Where? I want to know.

Remember the ostrich quote—that when the biblical writers mention Satan and demons, that carries no more authority than if they mention ostriches? The biblical writers aren't contributing anything to zoology when they mention ostriches and so the biblical writers aren't contributing anything to theology when they mention Satan and demons. Remember that quote? Sorry, but there's no New Testament doctrine of ostriches built on Old Testament ostrich content, but there's plenty of New Testament doctrine built on (or which presumes) Old Testament conflict with a cosmic enemy that becomes known as Satan. There's plenty of that. And demonic forces that oppose God's people, there's plenty of that. Sorry, but Satan and demons material is not like Old Testament mentions of ostriches because the New Testament builds on that Old Testament content. But again, back to my question. If they don't get it from the Old Testament, where do they get it? Tell me.

Now I want to reinforce this point because it's so dramatic. Here's a list, and it's not exhaustive. I mean, I just took a few minutes and pulled these out of my New Testament. Here's a list of places in the New Testament where I would say there is conflict theology. But for the Waltons, these passages contain *no truth content* about Satan or demons. Let's just go through. Again, this is not an exhaustive list, but you might be exhausted by the time we get through it.

- Matthew 4 and Luke 4: Satan and Jesus in the wilderness. No, there's no conflict there. Nothing to learn, either. Jesus is tested 40 days, or maybe we're just reading that into the text. Maybe we're reading the whole testing or temptation into the text, because if we affirm that this really happened to Jesus, then we're actually affirming that the character called Satan did something. We actually learned something about Satan and the devil. And we can't do that because the New Testament has no truth content about Satan and demons, right? Where is this idea of Satan being in the wilderness and having the ability to tempt? Where does it come from if not the Old Testament? Again, the Waltons habitually don't even raise questions like this. They avoid them.
- How about Matthew 12:22-28? I'll read it.

**<sup>22</sup> Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. <sup>23</sup> And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" <sup>24</sup> But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out**



**demons.”<sup>25</sup> Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.<sup>26</sup> And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?<sup>27</sup> And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.<sup>28</sup> But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**

40:00

See, this is the passage Farrar pointed to. Jesus bases his ministry on the reality of this scene! And there the Waltons are saying, “Oh, we can’t learn anything about Satan and demons here. No conflict.”

- How about Matthew 25:41?

**<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.**

Hey, Waltons, I’m asking, “Where does Matthew get that theology? Where does he get it?” I can tell you where he got it. I can look into Second Temple literature and even some Old Testament allusions to demonic spirits being in Sheol. I can tell you where he got it, but you can’t because you’ve denied any truth content being there. If there’s no conflict theology prior to the New Testament, why was the Lake of Fire created for the devil and his angels? Or maybe we just deny that there is one. Is this only New Testament? Sorry, I forgot, there’s no conflict theology in the New Testament, either. It’s kind of weird to punish the devil and his angels in any way if there’s no conflict! Why punish the devil and his angels in any way if there’s no conflict theology?

- How about Mark 4:15, the Parable of the Sower? Who takes the seed away? The devil. No conflict there. When he takes the seed away, there’s no conflict with God’s program there. It’s perfectly in concert with God’s program. And the Waltons would say, “Well, no, you’re reading into it. What we’re supposed to learn there is something about God—that God has a program.” Well, that’s nice. So it just stops there. So you two are going to tell us what we *can* learn from a passage and what we *can’t* learn on the basis of whether it’s a cosmic good guy or a cosmic bad guy. If it’s a cosmic bad guy, we can’t learn anything. It’s picking and choosing.
- Luke 10:18. Satan falls from heaven in response to the preaching of the kingdom—in response to the beginning, the inauguration, of the kingdom.

**<sup>18</sup> And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.**

There's no conflict there? Sure looks like conflict to me!

- John 8:44

**<sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning...**

Well, how can John say that if we can't learn anything about the devil from the Old Testament? John, where are you getting that silly idea?

**He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.**

You realize that the Waltons are saying those statements are not true. Those statements are not true. Because if they are true, there is conflict in the Old Testament. You have a Satan figure who is a liar, who is opposing the plan of God from the Old Testament, and they don't want to admit that. So what we read right there in John 8:44 is not true.

- John 13:27

**<sup>27</sup> Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into [Judas]. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."**

So Satan enters into Judas to betray Jesus, but there's no conflict there.

- How about Acts 5:3?

**<sup>3</sup> But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?"**

You realize that if the Waltons are right, what we just read there is wrong. We can't learn that Satan filled the heart of Ananias because that would be learning truth content about Satan. And there's no conflict there? Hello? How is this not in opposition to God's will and program? How is this not conflict? It reminds me of 1 Corinthians 7:5. This is advice on marriage sexuality:

**<sup>5</sup> Do not deprive one another [sexually], except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then**



**come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.**

Well there we just learned that Satan can tempt us, didn't we? Not according to the Waltons. Again, there's no truth content. There's no propositional truth about Satan and demons in the Bible.

- Acts 10:38.

**<sup>38</sup> ...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.**

Now this passage, I guess, doesn't really teach us that people were oppressed by the devil. The devil is just mentioned to teach us other things (something about God), but we don't actually learn that the devil can oppress people there. In other words, the passage is wrong because the passage claims that the devil was oppressing people. So it's either wrong or it's just not there. And the Waltons don't go through their book saying, "We deny this, we deny that, we deny this..." but this is the effect. They don't even ask these interpretive questions.

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- Acts 26:18. Here we don't learn Satan has power over unbelievers. I'll read the verse. Let me back up one verse here. This is Paul's conversion story when Jesus confronts him:

**And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. <sup>16</sup> But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, <sup>17</sup> delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'**

So in other words, this passage does not teach that there is an opposition between Satan and God and that the gospel is part of how this is broken. There's no conflict theology here, according to the Waltons. How can you not have conflict when Paul is testifying, "Look, the gospel turns people from darkness to light and it delivers people from the power of Satan to God." How can there be no conflict there?

- How about Romans 16:20? Here's where Paul gets to be... Well, Paul's gotten to be wrong before as we've been going through these, but here he's *really* wrong. Let's see here. Paul says in Romans 16:19, speaking to the Romans:

**<sup>19</sup> For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. <sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.**

That's an allusion, folks, to Genesis 3:15. Paul uses spiritual warfare talk in an allusion to Genesis 3:15, but the Waltons say there's no conflict theology—not only in Genesis 3, but nowhere. Was Paul wrong? It sure looks like he's wrong if the Waltons are right! What Paul says in Romans 16:20 takes us back to Eden, and the Waltons need to explain why. Why does Paul do this if there's no conflict to be seen in Genesis 3?

- 2 Corinthians 4:4

**<sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

You can read 2 Corinthians 4 and get the wider context that Satan is the god of this world, but according to the Waltons, here we *don't* learn that Satan is the god of this world blinding unbelievers. Okay, if they're right, where would Paul get this theology? Where would he get it if it's not derived from something in the Old Testament? The Waltons would say, "Paul has no theology here. So, Mike, your questions is pointless. There's no conflict here." I'm just going to leave it to listeners to decide which option makes more sense on all of these.

- 2 Corinthians 2:11

**<sup>11</sup> so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.**

Silly, Paul. He thinks Satan has plans to thwart his ministry, but that would suggest that there's a conflict, wouldn't it? The Waltons would simply say Paul has nothing to teach us here.

I hope you're getting the obvious already. With all this New Testament spiritual warfare talk in the New Testament, I ask again, "Where do New Testament writers get their theology, if not the Old Testament?" And if you're new to me and

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my material, my answer to you is “read my stuff.” It’s the quickest way to get the answer to that question. I’ll show you where they get it. The Waltons just say there is no theological truth here. They simply assert that. They assert it whether it makes any sense or not and they don’t even bring up questions about all of this like I’m doing right now.

- 2 Corinthians 11:14. Here we don’t learn that Satan can present himself as an angel of light.

**<sup>14</sup> And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.**

- Ephesians 4:27, Paul writes:

**<sup>27</sup> and give no opportunity to the devil.**

Well, why should we care what Paul says here? There’s no conflict theology in the Bible. Satan’s not after us.

- How about Ephesians 6:11 and following?

**<sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.**

Then Paul goes through the components of the believer’s armor. Well, Paul, you’re downright goofy here. You would certainly fail a Walton’s Hermeneutics class, big time.

Folks, do you get the point? Why would we need spiritual armor if there’s no conflict? Why? What Paul writes here makes no sense at all if there’s no conflict. Again, in the Walton’s thinking, this passage doesn’t actually teach us anything about the powers of darkness. So we need to look for other things that the passage teaches. It certainly doesn’t teach spiritual warfare, according to them.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:9

**<sup>9</sup> The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,**

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Yep. Well, if the coming of the lawless one is not by the activity of Satan, by whose activity is it? And if we do have an antichrist figure (again, a great opposer to the Messiah), where does Paul get this theology? It's amazing that Paul associates false signs and wonders with Satan, isn't it? Where does he get this idea? I forgot. The text has no truth content to give us here, per the Waltons.

- Hebrews 2:14-15. Here's where the writer of Hebrews gets to be wrong.

**<sup>14</sup> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself [Jesus] likewise partook of the same things [MH: the incarnation], that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.**

Again, here's where the writer of Hebrews gets to be wrong. The writer is obviously getting his theology from Genesis 3. Where else would he get it—that the devil has the power of death? This is where death enters the world—Genesis 3, the Garden of Eden! But per the Waltons, there's no cosmic enemy in Genesis 3; it's just a serpent or serpent imagery for some other purpose. But I have a question. If it's just a snake, how does the snake talk? How does what a snake says or does have cosmic implications? How does that work? How does New Testament theology about Satan work at all without Old Testament conflict in the first place? Of course, the Waltons answer is simple: the New Testament doesn't have conflict theology; we're just imagining it, just like the Old Testament lacks it as well.

- How about James 4:7?

**<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

Here we learn that we don't need to resist the devil, because if we had to resist him, that would suggest spiritual conflict with Satan and demonic powers, which isn't in the Bible (again, according to the Waltons).

- 1 Peter 5:8.

**<sup>8</sup> Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

No, he doesn't. The devil's not on the prowl for believers because that would be spiritual conflict theology.

- 1 John 3:8.

**<sup>8</sup>Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.**

Oh, that's a choice line. I wonder where John got that. It sounds suspiciously like Genesis 3 again. But John gets to be wrong like the other New Testament writers. Again, if there's no conflict, where do they get their theology?

- Revelation 12:9, John bungles again:

**<sup>9</sup>And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world...**

That certainly sounds like conflict to me.

**...he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.**

John bungles again. He actually thought the devil (or Satan) was the serpent. Poor John. He writes about it in the context of the war in heaven at the birth of the Son of God. Doesn't he know there's no conflict theology in scripture? Doesn't John know that? Again, the Waltons need to tell us whether they really believe John is wrong or not. And if they don't believe he's wrong, then they need to explain why they refuse to say the things about the serpent that John does. You can't have it both ways.

- Revelation 20:2. The last one.

**<sup>2</sup>And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,**

Why would Satan's powers need to be restrained in this passage? If there's no conflict theology, why does he need to be restrained? The Waltons would say, "Well, he doesn't. That's just what the text says, but it's not really teaching us anything. We can't really see truth content there. The Bible doesn't teach us that Satan has any powers," again, according to the Waltons. This is what's in this book. Again, it's one of the most perplexing, strange, astonishing, and bizarre things I've ever read.

55:00

Now, again, I wanted to go through that survey so you understand why I say what I'm saying. It's just so strange. The New Testament is filled with this, and so is Second Temple literature. Where do these writers get their theology, if not from the Old Testament? And even if you don't want it to come from the Old Testament, to deny that there's spiritual conflict in the face of all these (and I could give you more) references is just unbelievable, but that's what they do.

How about some other questions? What about other supernatural actors in the biblical stories? How about angels? Did we think about that? How about angels? Why is there truth content for the good guys, but not the bad guys? Or maybe the Waltons would say there is no truth content about the good guys as well. Maybe the Waltons would deny the Bible has any truth content about angels. They aren't clear. They don't raise this question. Do you see the obvious problem? If they say there is truth content for angels, then the question is, "Why not the bad guys?" It's not like angels aren't involved in spiritual warfare either (the Day of the Lord passages, again, the heavenly host coming, Zechariah 14, and passages like that). Angels *are* involved in spiritual warfare, at least in the Bible I have. But since the Waltons want to deny spiritual conflict theology totally, it would make more sense for them to just land in the same place on angels and say, "The Bible doesn't teach us anything about angels either." So either they're inconsistent or else they have to conclude the Bible gives us no truth content, not only about Satan and demons, but about angels as well—all the supernatural characters. The Bible has nothing to teach us here. These are not truth propositions.

How about another thought? Why would we affirm the Bible gives us truth content about the triune God, if not about all the other members of the spiritual world? It's the same world. It's the spiritual world. God is an inhabitant of the spiritual world, just like Satan, demons, angels. If we can't get any truth propositions about Satan and demons and possibly even angels, on what basis do we get truth content about the other characters in the spiritual realm, like God himself? Why is this dichotomy sensible? This is what I want to know from a Walton defender (and all the other questions I've been asking). On what basis do we affirm the Bible gives us truth about one character in the spiritual world (God) but not the other ones? Tell me. What is the basis? What insight allows us to say, "The words in this part of the Bible don't give us truth content, but in other parts we get truth content." Again, if I were an atheist apologist, I would see this as a hole I could drive a large truck through because it means you're utterly inconsistent with the way you're handling the main source of your belief system—the Bible. It's either a reliable source or it isn't, and for you to affirm parts of it and not affirm other parts of it as truth-telling—truth propositions—that gives me as an atheist apologist plenty of ammunition against you because I'm going to press you for an answer to the question. I'm not going to avoid the question like the Waltons do. I'm going to press you for it. I'm going to press you until I make you cry.

1:00:00

Third thought. Aside from supernatural categories, we could ask, “How is it we know we get truth content in the Bible about things that are inherently supernatural in nature just generally, but not about supernatural beings like Satan, demons, and potentially angels?” In other words, I’m talking here about doctrinal items like demonic possession. Again, if we can’t get truth content about demonic possession, especially when Jesus uses that to defend the whole concept of the inauguration of his kingdom, then how do we use the New Testament? How do we know that the New Testament gives us truth about anything else doctrinally? How about an afterlife? I mean, what the Old Testament has to say about the afterlife... there isn’t that much content. There’s some. I mean, I personally think there’s more than a lot of Old Testament scholars think (and we’ve done episodes on that before, like the psalms of Korah with David Mitchell)... There isn’t much of it, but the New Testament authors build on this. They build on it. How about the incarnation? There’s nothing in the Old Testament about the incarnation. This is a theological category. It is a supernatural truth, right? A supernatural truth comes from the New Testament about the incarnation. And again, granted you can see allusions in one or two Old Testament passages. I’m going to grant that, but let’s just talk about the New Testament here. How is it that we can be sure we’re getting truth content about things like the incarnation and afterlife, the concept of salvation itself, and the person of God if we can’t trust it to give us truth content about Satan, demons, and potentially even angels? How does this work? Again, we need revelation for these things. There’s this concept in theology called “revelation.” We need revelation. We need to be told these things, and this is what we believe the Bible does. It gives us information. We’re not depending on science or our cognitive environment of ancient peoples. The incarnation isn’t part of their cognitive environment. The hypostatic union, okay, with Jesus, two natures in one person... That’s not part of their cognitive environment. Okay? That’s revelation. So why can’t this other stuff about Satan and demons be revelation as well? Why? I mean, the Waltons deny the Bible gives us revelation about demons, Satan, and potentially angels—spiritual adversaries. Why do they allow the Bible to have truth content on some of these things and not others? It’s the same book. It’s the same source. It’s talking about the same spiritual world. It’s talking about the same sorts of supernatural acts and supernatural ideas and concepts. On what basis do we say, “Well, this is truth content here, but not there.” That’s what I want to know.

Fourth thought, in regard to topics not being “systematized” in the Old Testament (and here I’d throw a little bit at the reviewer)—in other words, thoughts that aren’t developed, ideas that aren’t developed in the Old Testament. The Waltons and the reviewer would say, “Because we don’t have much information that’s developed or systematized, then we really can’t look at that as truth content.” Well, pardon, but *some* truth content isn’t the same as *no* truth content. That’s pretty simple logic. What other Old Testament topics would be disqualified from giving us truth content? How about anthropology—biblical anthropology? What



makes up a human being, “body and soul,” “spirit,” or “body, soul, and spirit”—dichotomy versus trichotomy? We shouldn’t even be talking about that because it’s not a systematized thing in the Old Testament. We shouldn’t even be getting doctrine like that. How about the image of God? Is that developed in the Old Testament? Again, I would say there is a good bit of development there, but a lot of theologians and a lot of biblical scholars would say, “No, it’s just like one verse (or a couple of verses). It’s not systematized. It’s not developed so we can’t really assign too much truth content to it.” Really? Again, how about the afterlife? How about the Kingdom of God? You’re telling me that doesn’t get a lot of development in the New Testament? Meaning there’s not much development in the Old in certain aspects of the kingdom.

I mean, this whole notion that because a doctrine isn’t systematized means it’s not really a doctrine is nonsense. It just means that we have partial information instead of more complete information. We’re not throwing the baby out with the bath water! Ideas develop from the Old Testament through the Second Temple period through the New Testament, but the Waltons don’t want to see that for Satan and demons. They want to say there’s no truth content in the Old Testament or Second Temple period or the New Testament about Satan and demons. You can’t even use a word like “develop” because there’s no content at all. Hence, I go back to the title of their book. How can you do a biblical theology of something that the Bible doesn’t teach us about? It’s absurd. It’s an absurdity. It’s a logical absurdity. How about salvation? How about the concept of salvation prior to the cross? Is that fully developed? Is that a developed soteriology? Well, if it’s not, then we can’t learn anything about salvation from the Old Testament, can we? “Well, Mike, the New Testament quotes the Old Testament. A circumcised heart and things like...” Yeah, it does, doesn’t it? Just like it alludes to certain things about a cosmic enemy and conflict. So why is it that you’re willing to accept the allusions and the quotations when it comes to salvation, but you’re not when it comes to Satan and demons? It’s “capital I” inconsistent.

1:05:00

Again, I’m hoping that... We’re beating a dead horse by this point, but I’m hoping you’re seeing how inconsistent this whole approach is. It’s very strange, especially given the New Testament dependence on the Old. In the entire period of the Second Temple era, they’re doing theology from the Old Testament, folks. They’re interacting with the Old Testament. They’re expanding upon it. They’re debating it. They’re thinking about it. This is what happens in the New Testament—interaction, expansion, debate, thinking about it, this going back and forth. This is what these writers in both the Second Temple period and the New Testament itself are doing, but the reference point is the Old Testament. So if we can accept this for certain doctrines, why are we rejecting it when it comes to Satan and demons? That’s what I want to know. Where’s the coherence here?

Now if I asked, “How do the Waltons justify this?” Their answer would be. “By appeal to genre.” And honestly this is misleading. I have a question. What genre



disallows the writer in expressing belief in supernatural beings? What genre could I use as a biblical writer that would disallow me to express a belief in supernatural beings? The answer is “none of them.” To use myself as a writer for illustration, genre doesn’t dictate what a writer believes. It wouldn’t dictate what I believe. I could write narrative. I could write poetry. I could write a letter. I could write a legal document. I could write an apocalyptic warning. Okay? I could relate a vision. I could use all these genres. I can write using any genre and can express my belief in supernatural beings in *all* of them with no trouble at all. And so can biblical writers, and so they did. In narrative, biblical writers in the Old Testament have a character called the Angel of Yahweh—the Angel of the Lord. So what rules out the truth content about that character, the fact that it’s narrative genre? How does the use of a genre disallow the writer telling you that he believes that there’s an Angel of the Lord? Well, it doesn’t, but the Waltons have already said that the goal of hermeneutics is not to think the biblical writer’s thoughts after him, which is completely opposite of what I and a boatload of other hermeneutics teachers would say to you. Again, this is why the book is so strange. If the goal of hermeneutics is not to understand what the biblical writers had in their heads, what is the goal? What’s the point? You end up imposing your own thought system on it is where you end up.

1:10:00

Let’s just back up a little bit. If the Waltons allow truth content about the Angel of the Lord, then why not the bad guys? Why the good guys? The good guys were allowed to have truth content, but the bad guys were not. See genres are just different modes of expression. They’re different modes of communication. No genre forbids expression of supernatural belief—zero. Just because a writer might use narrative and background to figure, like, the angel in a story doesn’t mean the material can’t express truth about the angel. I mean, not every character is there for the same reason. The gods of the nations causing Israel to sin are not just background nonsense—background noise. That’s an important theme in the Old Testament. They’re an important part of the story! The princes of Daniel 10 aren’t just peripheral characters. The revealing angels in Daniel are an important part of the story. Maybe the Waltons accept the revealing angels like Gabriel, but then why not the bad guys? Are the gods of Egypt that Yahweh says he defeated really background material to the point where there is no conflict theology in the Old Testament? If so (if there’s no conflict theology), why is Yahweh extolling his victory in Exodus 15? What’s the Song of Moses doing in Exodus 15 if there’s no conflict theology? I mean, again and again and again this has shown to be inconsistent. How about the Messiah? Do we realize that information about the Messiah comes to us through various genres that are supposedly not about truth assertions—things like poetry (Psalm 2? Psalm 16? Psalm 45? Psalm 110?). Hello? Just because it’s poetry doesn’t mean it’s not teaching us propositional truth. Okay? This is a misleading thing to talk about how genre forbids or excludes or minimizes truth content. Genres are just a means of communication and they do not forbid the writer from communicating beliefs about the supernatural world. They just don’t. And the point is, it can apply

to the New Testament as well. They use all sorts of genres to do doctrinal talk, to teach us doctrine. It's not just one genre that does that. I think the Waltons are out of bounds in forbidding that we do the same with Satan and demons. Again, if you want to try a test, give me the genre untouched by any New Testament writer. I mean, they use all the genres and they teach theology throughout the New Testament. We get theology from every genre is the point. Genre is not a place to hide to avoid truth content.

Now ultimately, what the Waltons are doing is... Let's go back to the cosmology point. We have to go back to this before we wrap up here. They're associating... In the Old Testament, you have cosmology that we don't accept because of our science, right? Round, solid, dome. (You've heard me talk about this before. This is nothing new, okay?) And there are demons in the Old Testament associated with weather and plague, like Qeteb and Deber in Habakkuk 3. So what the Waltons are doing is, "Well, we don't accept this cosmology and therefore we don't have to accept what the Bible says about Satan and demons." Again, the Bible teaches about the structure of the universe and the earth, weather, [audio breaks up] and we can also reject what it says about supernatural conflict and the beings involved in that (again, I would ask, is that both good and bad guys?). But again, I don't want to stray too far because this is where they're at. This is their test case. This is what they think is their linchpin argument.

I actually think it's a great weakness because it's methodologically inconsistent and it's going to fail. The reason we reject Old Testament cosmology is not genre. It's science. We can justify rejecting this kind of cosmology and associating demons with plagues and diseases and things like that. We can justify that because we have science and we have science because of what? A biblical idea called the dominion mandate. This is the "be fruitful and multiply, go subdue the earth"—this whole mandate given to us in Genesis 1—the dominion mandate. And this is traditional theology. I'm not coming up with anything new here. Especially in reform circles, they're big on this. The dominion mandate requires that humans learn what makes the earth and even the cosmos tick so that it *can* be mastered—so that it *can* be controlled, so it *can* be stewarded. The dominion mandate presumes the scientific enterprise and it also presumes growth and scientific knowledge. The same God who gave us the mandate would have known that this growth would happen. God would've known that humans, as they learn about the creation, they're going to learn stuff, they're going to accumulate knowledge. It's going to grow, it's going to develop what they understand about the world. God knows this about people, and he gives them the mandate, knowing that they're going to outgrow their present knowledge as biblical people. God knows that and he *wants* it. God wants science. God wants the growth in the knowledge of the natural world because God wants the world subdued and stewarded. That is the dominion mandate. God is fully aware that the people writing scripture were going to be left in the dust in their knowledge of the natural world by succeeding generations. And God is not only good with it, he

commands it. He requires it. He demands it. God himself knows more than the writers knew, but he lets the writers express truths about creation in the ways that they're capable. The Waltons and I would agree on this point, but then the Waltons make a fatal methodological flaw: they apply scientific thinking. This whole reason for, again, rejecting Old Testament cosmology is actually science. It's not genre. They apply the scientific thinking to things on which science can't comment—i.e., the spiritual world. Then they cover up that flaw by pretending genre dictates what we should believe.

1:15:00

The honest truth is that we discard biblical cosmology as reality because of science, not because of genre. That's why. That's the honest truth, and it's absolutely obvious in the history of Christian theology. Again, the dominion mandate idea is a very, very, *very* old one in Christian theology. Mike didn't come up with this, okay? I'm just standing on the shoulders of tens of thousands of other theologians. We can judge what the Bible says about earthly and off-planet cosmology because the tools of science can test those things. The tools of science cannot test claims about the spiritual world and its inhabitants. One cannot use the tools of testing nature on a realm and beings that are not part of nature. It's so obvious. Instead of a solid argument in their favor, the Waltons provide a classic case of apples and oranges logic. Right there it is. The spiritual world and its inhabitants cannot be tested and validated or invalidated by the tools of science. They are mutually exclusive things. The Waltons act and write as though they are not. So their test case is an out-of-the-gate failure! It's apples and oranges logic, a classic example of it. They are forcing a modern cognitive environment (one that is scientific) on items that cannot be tested by science.

An illustration... If you're a defender of the Waltons' view, tell me how it is that we can use the tools of science to judge cosmology, but then not use the tools of science to judge the existence of God? How about using the tools of science to judge the incarnation, the virgin birth, the hypostatic union, the concept of salvation, the invisible kingdom of God? I could go on and on and on. You know that you can't use the tools of science to judge those things and you're glad, okay? You're glad because those things stand apart from science; they can only be judged by logical coherence. But then you turn around and you're freely willing to use the tools of science to deny the truth content in scripture about Satan and demons and maybe angels. "Capital I" inconsistent. Again, if I were an atheist apologist, you have just filled my gas tank to drive my truck through Christian theology.

There's only one way out of this (and it's not what the Waltons are writing), and that is the philosophical coherence of theism. *That* is what I describe on my FAQ page. If you want to know what Mike thinks about this, go to [drms.com](http://drms.com) > About > FAQ page. It's the last question, okay? This is what I'm describing on my FAQ page as to why we can judge what the Bible says about supernatural beings and topics. We cannot use the tools of science because these items are not part of

the natural world. That is self-evident, but it gets ignored by the Waltons. Only logical coherence tests are useful to evaluating the truth quality of supernatural claims. So while I would agree with the Waltons' take on applying science (and again, it's not genre, it's science) to biblical cosmology to make clear what the Bible is asking us to believe versus what is simply the means of description (I agree with that part), I disagree on applying scientific thinking to supernatural claims made in the Bible. They are two different things. We use the rules of logical coherence for that, and theism has been evaluated for centuries by those means and held up quite well. That approach allows us to affirm what the Bible says about spiritual beings, whether it offends our scientific worldview or not. Put simply, there are things science cannot judge. Science is only operable in the natural world. It is not operable outside the natural world.

So again, if you want to know what I think, go to [drmsh.com](http://drmsh.com) > About > FAQ and you can read my response to the last question. I'll just read you the last question.

You have written about your belief that the Genesis creation accounts were not intended to put forth science. If we are not to understand Genesis 1 and 2 literally (i.e., as a scientific sequence of events), how is it that you advocate taking other passages about supernatural beings as literal or more literally?

1:20:00

That's the question. So that's what I proceed to answer. I could just summarize what I have there in this way, and then we'll wrap up. I know this is getting long, but this is kind of an important episode to me because I think the book is so harmful—unintentionally, but I think their book is so harmful to Christian thinking. I would put things this way. The Bible makes a number of claims about supernatural beings that defy science, all the way from the virgin birth to the sons of God of Genesis 6. Applying the rules of logic or philosophical coherence to these claims equally produces a view that says yes, the Bible claims about supernatural beings are *logically* defensible. We can't claim they are *scientifically* defensible because the claims are not part of the natural world. So I'm not a concordist, and neither are the Waltons. I'm keeping the apples and oranges separate. The Waltons are putting them together. That's the basic difference between our approaches.

So here's how it would go. To illustrate how this works with a scriptural claim involving supernatural beings, here are twelve propositions for logical coherence testing—not scientific testing, but this is to test something's logical coherence. These are twelve items that need to be tested logically that build on one another. If these things can be shown to be logically coherent, then anything the Bible says about supernatural beings in its pages can be affirmed because they survive the test of logical coherence.

1. There is a God.

2. This God who exists is a person.
3. This personal God is eternal and the first cause of all material (natural) reality and has the necessary power to create that material reality.
4. As a person, this God has attributes of personality or personhood (intelligence, sentience, freedom, rationality, emotions, volition, communication ability, etc.).
5. This personal Creator God is unique and possesses these attributes optimally and exhaustively.
6. This personal God can make decisions and act upon them wisely.
7. Among the decisions this personal God can make might be the decision to create disembodied beings like himself, or embodied beings with whom he shares certain of his own attributes.
8. These shared attributes would enable both the disembodied and embodied beings that were created to have emotional, intellectual, psychological lives (i.e., “inner lives” or thoughts of self).
9. In creating both embodied and disembodied beings, this personal God could also give one set (i.e., the disembodied beings) abilities not shared by the other set (or the embodied beings) he has made.
10. If these disembodied beings also shared attributes of their Creator, they themselves could have the power to create, using the ingredients of material reality. We as embodied beings can do that. Disembodied beings can certainly do it.
11. If these disembodied beings also shared attributes of their Creator, they themselves could interact with the embodied beings made by the Creator, including both physical and spiritual or psychological interaction. Why not?
12. If these disembodied beings also shared attributes of their Creator, they themselves could use their freedom (free will) to rebel against the desires of their Creator.

Now these propositions are logically coherent and defensible, and they have been for millennia. That is, denying any of them is logically incoherent. Their affirmability can be demonstrated through logical testing and argument. Their coherence has been defended by philosophers who are Christians, or are of some other faith, or of no faith at all, over centuries—then again, even millennia. Their coherence is all that is needed to affirm the logical (but not scientific)

reasonableness of any claim about and for a supernatural being made in the Bible, including controversial passages like Genesis 6:1-4. There is no need to invent explanations.

Let's just use that passage as an example. There is no need to invent explanations for such passages that are exegetically nonsensical (like the Sethite view) to avoid what the Bible says about supernatural beings and their abilities. There's no need to do that. While there may be more than one supernatural way to understand a passage like Genesis 6:1-4 (and I wrote about that in *The Unseen Realm*, p. 185-187), it is unnecessary to strip the supernatural content from the passage to make it palatable to a scientific worldview. What supernatural beings are and what they might be capable of doing lies outside the provenance of scientific inquiry because they are not part of the natural world. Science can only test the natural world. This is an approach that the Waltons have simply not considered or ignored.

1:25:00

So to wrap up, what is the fundamental difference between the Waltons' work and my own? Let's just end this way. In a nutshell, the Waltons give Christians permission to not believe what their Bible plainly says about Satan, demons, and spiritual conflict theology. They're evangelical skeptics. They give Christians permission to not believe these parts of their Bible. My work gives Christians permission to believe the Bible on these matters. And it isn't just me. If you read my work, look at the footnotes please. I bring along plenty of scholars that are evangelical or not. I bring along plenty of scholars, and even what I have in the footnotes is just a fraction of the material that I could marshal. I mean, I've got thousands of references, thousands of articles on these things. I bring along plenty of other people who would be on my side (at least in the broad terms) about the powers of darkness and the long war against the plan of God in the spiritual realm. Even scholars with no commitment to Christ who are quite familiar with Second Temple texts know that they have a clear spiritual warfare theology in them, and there are a lot of those people. I depend on their work. A lot of really, really good scholars are going to be on my side of this and on the side of Farrar, the reviewer, when he pushes back against the Waltons' idea here. They avoid the questions that I've raised in this episode. They avoid the obvious questions brought up by the reviewer that I started with about the overt presence of conflict theology in Second Temple and New Testament texts, for example.

And since the New Testament is part of Second Temple literature and builds on it, the major question is, "Where do these writers get their theology?" The Waltons avoid... They don't raise that question. I am and I want to know. In other words, they're doing the opposite. These other writers (and, again, I quoted my sources)... I'll include myself here. We're doing the opposite of what the Waltons want you to do. The Waltons want you to think that there is no theology to be had here. I am on the side of the ancient writers, especially the New Testament. And



you should be, too, if you're serious about understanding scripture. And if the New Testament is an inspired commentary on the Old Testament (and it is), that ought to matter as well.

**TS:** Mike, do you have any idea on how their book has been received in academia?

**MH:** No, it's only been reviewed twice, so it hasn't gotten much attention at all. Both reviews are generally positive and polite, but again, the Farrar review that I started with is the one that offers push back. The one in *Religious Studies* more or less describes what the contents of the book are and does not really do anything evaluative, whereas Farrar's review does. And again, Farrar knows the material (Second Temple and New Testament) and he is like, "Dudes, what about all this stuff?" Especially how the New Testament builds on it and constructs theology from these pieces you get in the Old Testament and in Second Temple literature. It's so obvious. So my judgment, because it's only gotten two reviews and it's only got about 60 or 70 reviews on Amazon (which isn't obviously a scholarly review place), but the book seems to have gotten very little attention. That's the only way I could judge that. I could be wrong, but that's all you have to go on. That's all you have to go on.

**TS:** John Walton is a good scholar. He's written several good books.

**MH:** I know.

**TS:** Why do you think he missed the mark on this?

**MH:** I think they're afraid. I think they're afraid. I think it's a fear-based approach. I think they're afraid that if they affirm these things in the Old Testament, then the Bible... To them it looks like mythology and I think they're scared of that. And the reason it looks like mythology is because they have failed to keep the apples separate from the oranges. We can't evaluate these claims (the Bible's spiritual claims) on the basis of science like we can other things. We have to evaluate them on a different basis, but they don't see how they can operate in both realms. They combine these things, and they end up comparing apples with oranges. And they feel compelled to do that because if they don't, well then it's like, "We're affirming mythology," like Genesis 6 and stuff like this. And I'm saying, "No, you don't have to do that." If you just go through those 12 propositions, they're all defensible logically and God can create spiritual beings that can have powers and can do things in their interactions with us that we can't or that would blow our minds or that are beyond our understanding—beyond our science. Spiritual beings are beyond science, but the Waltons don't seem, again, to see that. They've gone this other direction. And like I said, it is a classic example of apples and oranges logic, comparing two different things that really aren't comparable, but they think they are and that's what guides them.

1:30:00

So I think they have a fear-based approach to the whole topic because they want to avoid the mythological stuff and they know that if they deny it in the Old Testament, then they have to deny it in the New or else they're really, really inconsistent between the testaments. But when you deny this stuff in the New Testament (I mean, I must have gone through 20 passages, 20-25 passages), you end up denying what these passages plainly say.

So if you were just a casual reader... Let's say you're not really familiar with the Christian world of evangelicalism. Let's say you're just not familiar with the lay of the land theologically at all and you read this book and then somebody asks you, "Are the Waltons Bible believers?" It would be hard for you to say yes because they deny so much of its content as being truth content. And I don't think they do that intentionally, it's just where their tactic leads. And, again, if I were an atheist apologist... man, I would make hay with this because I would want to pin the evangelical skeptic (the fearful evangelical), I would want to pin them down with this kind of thinking and then ask them, "Well, why do you accept what the Bible says about Jesus if the Bible's not a good source? I mean, you claim it's inspired, Christian. You're saying it's the word of God. You quoted 2 Timothy 3:16 that all scripture is given by inspiration." It would be an easy argument to pin a Christian and say, "Look, you claim this is inspired truth and it's the word of God and yet you don't... You're saying that a lot of it doesn't have truth content to it, and I happen to notice that you're being selective there. You're targeting the bad guys (Satan and demons) in scripture. Well, how do we know what it says about Jesus is right?"

It's such an easy thing for a militant atheist apologist to seize upon and hammer away at, which is why I decided I would do this episode even though it's distasteful to me. I consider John Walton a friend. Maybe I've lost that friendship. I am loathe to comment on the work of people that I really appreciate. Walton does such good work in a number of other areas, and I will continue to try to recommend those things, but now I have to qualify it. Now I have to say, "Hey, use Walton except for this book over here." And that's just really sad. It's unfortunate. It really is and it pains me, again, to do an episode like this, but I think the issue is so important because of how their content can be used against people of faith, that it just had to be done.

So I felt like I was in a quandary when I would get these requests to do an episode commenting on Walton because I know what it's going to sound like. I know what it's going to sound like. It's going to make their... It sounds like what it just sounded like. The book is very strange in what it does, but it's motivated by a fear hermeneutic. They don't want the Bible to sound like mythology. But to avoid what I think is a false conclusion (because, again, these ideas that scripture can be logically defended and have been for millennia), I have given you twelve starting propositions. Test them all. Okay, they're all going to be affirmatory, and then any claim that the Bible makes about a spiritual being, you're going to find



help somewhere in those twelve propositions. I've given you the tools to do that, but instead of doing that, they go off and, again, they combine the apples and the oranges and they wind up denying a whole slew of things that are transparently obvious, not only to lay readers of scripture, but to other scholars.

It's just a strange book. It's a strange book. It's an unfortunate book. I understand the good they're trying to do. Again, they don't want the Bible to sound like mythology. I get it. I mean, I lived there for a good portion of my life. But I would have never gone this direction. I just sort of sat there and went with other explanations that I know now just don't work. I had to become honest with myself. It became an issue of scriptural authority with me—to be honest with what the text plainly said and then figure out a better way to think about it. I'm thankful and unrepentant that my life took that turn, but here we have, again, two scholars who are just... They don't see it. They don't see what the destructive power toward the people of faith that they want to be part of can do. They don't see what the destructive power can yield out of their own writings, but I do. I see it very clearly and we need to be on guard against it.

**TS:** Is there any positive takeaway from this book?

1:35:00

**MH:** Honestly, there's not a whole lot. I mean, I could quibble at other things about what they say about class II demons. I'm sorry, but the *shedim* are called *elohim*, okay? That's just the text. They are called *elohim*. The Waltons don't understand that *elohim* is just a term for a disembodied spiritual being. That's all it is. That's why we get the wide variety of usage we get in the Old Testament. I'm sorry, but the *shedim* are *elohim*, and so is the disembodied spirit of Samuel. It's an *elohim*. This class II, class III, type I, type... The Waltons construct that to try to get out of this mess. They only use Mesopotamian material to do it. They don't do anything with the Ugaritic stuff, which mystifies me still, maybe because that is where the parallels (from my view) are for the most part. I mean, I can show you Mesopotamian stuff, too, about the *shedim* and what-not. It's just so strange. It just so strange. There's really not a whole lot in this book that is really any worthwhile content. It is like the anti-Walton book. Walton books usually have lots of stuff that are really helpful—lots of things that are really helpful. This one does not have much of anything that's helpful. In fact, in the wrong hands, it could be quite destructive.

**TS:** Did they interact with your book at all?

**MH:** It's quoted in one place (or in a footnote) just by title. They don't interact with any of the content, but I'm going to be part.... I mean, I'm not where Greg Boyd is on certain things. I'm not an open theist. I'm not going to take the conflict theology in certain ways that he does. But I would be lumped in with conflict theologians because I do believe in Satan and demons and what the Bible says about them really does... These are propositional truths. They tell us true things

about Satan and about demons and what they do and can do and want to do. So I would be in the group that they're shooting at, but they don't shoot at me specifically. I think that the manuscript for this was probably certainly done before my *Demons* book. And *The Unseen Realm*, they probably just... They knew what the goal was. They wanted to address what Boyd was saying. Again, Boyd is a very popular writer and his books have been out for years, long before mine was. I've never actually read Boyd's... Gosh, what's the main title of his book, *God at War*? I've never actually read that. I mean, I'm reading Second Temple texts. I'm reading scholarly papers on exegesis in the Old Testament. That's what I read to produce *The Unseen Realm*. I wasn't reading anybody else in the evangelical world, but since then I've read parts of it, and I'm familiar with what the Waltons are shooting at in their criticism of Boyd. Part of it is the open theist stuff and part of it is just his take on supernatural beings, which I might agree with Greg on. I mean, I'm going to agree with a number of things that Greg has in his books and disagree with a few others, but that's really what their shooting at (and sort of the "demon under every rock" kind of theology that you get in Pentecostalism—lay Pentecostalism). That's really what the target is. It's not me because honestly, *The Unseen Realm* is just mainstream scholarship. I keep telling people all the time, "Look at the footnotes. Look at the footnotes. Look at the footnotes. Look at the bibliography." Okay? In all my books—the *Angels* book, the *Demons* book, *The Unseen Realm*... I don't just put this stuff in there because these are other books that exist. No, it's because there's really good content here and it's from mainstream publishers by mainstream scholars. And I even go outside the evangelical world to give you the leading voices in subjects like Enochian demonology and Dead Sea Scrolls demonology. I give readers the path, the titles, the references to mainstream scholars regardless of what they are (believer or unbeliever—wherever they are in the spectrum) because there's so much work done in these areas. I want people to know about it. Again, I'm just using their work and then building upon it and synthesizing. What I do is I connect dots. I synthesize material. That's what I do and that's my contribution—bringing all these voices together and giving a coherent picture. I'm giving you a worldview. I'm building the matrix for you, such as I can, as far as the framework goes. That's my role as a biblical scholar, and then I'm giving it to lay people. I'm not just writing for the scholar. I decided a long time ago (and there's a price to pay for this, but I'm willing to pay it)... I decided a long time ago that my ministry is going to be focused on the lay people, focused on the interested lay person—the person who wants to learn scripture and not in the academic community. I can do that. I'm published under peer review in articles and journals and stuff like that. I can do that and then, hopefully, Lord willing, if my health permits, I'll do some more of that (some more of both really). But the thing is, that's my role and I want people to know that this material exists—that scholars have written this stuff and you need to know about it.

1:40:00

I'm giving you permission to believe what your Bible says. And what the Waltons are doing is they're giving Christians permission to *not* believe it. They're writing

to evangelical skeptics that are afraid of some of this stuff that is actually in their Bible. I am not afraid of it. I understand the impulse. To the extent that I understand it, I am sympathetic with it because I feel for them, but their solution to it in this book is just awful, and in the wrong hands it can be very destructive.

**TS:** I'll be interested in the blowback after this episode. Looking forward to seeing what people say out there.

**MH:** I want to just teach content. I don't want to spend time on the podcast bickering with people. So this is my take on the Waltons. If it is not clear by this episode, it'll never be clear. If you want to know what I think, read my books. This is why I write them, so I don't have to keep repeating it. This is why we try to produce content that people can go access so that they don't have to keep coming to Mike. They need to have something that they can read, they can keep on their shelf, and they can reference. This is why we do what we do.

**TS:** Alright. Well, we need somebody to tell us where not to look sometimes.

**MH:** I know, but honestly in this case, if you read this book and you just read your New Testament, I mean, how odd does it sound? There's no conflict theology in the New Testament when Jesus bases the authority of his kingdom on an exorcism? How incongruent can you get? And again, Farrar, the reviewer, points this out right away, but it's just one of 20, 30, 40, 50 examples that I could've given scattered through the New Testament.

**TS:** Alright, Mike. Well, that was a great episode. I know everybody out there has been looking forward to it. Honestly, I don't think we'll be getting a Waltons Christmas card this year, but that's okay. We'll do without it.

**MH:** It's painful. That's all I can say.

**TS:** Alright, well, we hope everybody receives this episode well and looking forward to the feedback. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.