

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 441

The Afterlife, Part 2

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### Episode Summary

In this episode of the podcast, we continue our conversation with Dr. Justin Bass about the various terms we encounter in the Bible that describe the destination of the dead. If you've ever wondered about Gehenna, the Lake of Fire, Paradise, and Abraham's Bosom, you'll enjoy today's episode.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 441, The Afterlife, Part 2 with Dr. Justin Bass. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing?

**MH:** Doing pretty well, all things considered. So I'm heading into radiation treatments for my tumors so we'll keep everybody posted on how that goes.

**TS:** Yes, please do. Yeah, please do. That's going to go on for 3 weeks, you said, right? The whole month of September.

**MH:** Yeah.

**TS:** So the end of September hopefully we should know something, you think?

**MH:** Yeah, well, I would hope so one way or the other—that it did its job or it didn't. They tend to be pretty cautious so it may take a little longer than that, but they'll probably want me to get another MRI before they start really assessing anything, so we'll see.

5:00

**TS:** Yeah, alright, well prayers are continued. Well, Mike, this is a big weekend also. We have our Fantasy draft this weekend, so I just want to wish you good luck.

**MH:** Bad luck! [laughter]

**TS:** Yeah, bad luck. I hope you do bad. I hope it's a horrible year for you.

**MH:** I hope you're drafting all the guys that are going to get injured, yeah.

**TS:** I hope Aaron Rodgers does horrible, Packers are bad, and...

**MH:** Well, he's going late in drafts. I've done a number of mock drafts. Have you done any practice drafts?

**TS:** No, I still have not done any. You know I don't like that because I get stuck on my players I like. So I like just the chaos going fresh. So I have done *zero*.

**MH:** Yeah.

**TS:** Going in blind.

**MH:** Well, I've done enough to know pretty much where everybody's going to go.

**TS:** So you're saying late rounds, Rodgers.

**MH:** Not that it really helps, yeah.

**TS:** Yeah. What about Mahomes? When's he going?

**MH:** Yeah, Rodgers is going late.

**TS:** Is everybody jumping on Mahomes early, too early?

**MH:** No, Mahomes is the QB 2 in ADP and I'm sure our audience is just loving all these acronyms now for Fantasy Football, but he's the second quarterback that gets taken off the board typically, but Josh Allen is first.

**TS:** Mahomes just got inducted to the Texas Tech Red Raiders Hall of Fame.

**MH:** Well, he deserves it. I'll be excited if half my team doesn't get hurt again like last year. It was just a disaster.

**TS:** Well, at least we don't have to deal with the COVID protocols. That made it unbearable almost.

**MH:** Yeah. Yeah, that was bad.

**TS:** You could almost say it was hell, since we're talking about hell.

**MH:** [laughs] I see what you did there, yeah. I see what you did there.

**TS:** Yeah, did you like my segue there? Yeah, absolutely.

**MH:** Yeah, we'll live with it.

**TS:** Okay, yeah.

**MH:** We'll live with it.

**TS:** So the first episode was great talking about the afterlife and all that stuff, and then we continue the conversation this week.

**MH:** Yeah, we'll get into some New Testament vocabulary and expand on the discussion. So yeah, I thought the first part was good. The second part, I expect it will be the same and it will be informative.

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**MH:** Well, we're happy once again to have Justin Bass with us. Dr. Bass was with us in a previous episode talking about Biblical terms for the afterlife, both good and bad—mostly bad the first time around, but we got into some of the other cosmic geographical terminology. We are going to continue that discussion this time, but again, for the sake of people who have not listened to Part 1 yet (and I highly recommend before even listening to this one that you go listen to Part 1, but in case not), I am going to ask Justin to briefly introduce himself and then we'll jump right into it. So, Justin, thanks for being back with us.

**JB:** Thanks, Mike, yeah. It's been great having this discussion. Yeah, just a little bit about myself again. The Lord opened my eyes to himself a little over 20 years ago now in 2001. I was in college and God gave me a hunger for his Word and for apologetics, for theology, and threw me into seminary at Dallas Theological Seminary. And I did a Th.M and a Ph.D. Since then, I planted a church and taught at various schools and did mission work in the Middle East and I've written a few books—one on the resurrection, and my dissertation (which is a lot about what we're talking about) got published, called *The Battle for the Keys*. I actually have a chapter in that book that talks about these different compartments that we're talking about—Hades and Sheol and the Abyss and Tartarus and Gehenna and the Lake of Fire and Abraham's bosom and Paradise and Third Heaven and just all these fascinating terms of the cosmic geography—the unseen realms geography that we have from the scriptures I get into in that book. So those listening can go deeper in there in *The Battle for the Keys*.

**MH:** Yeah, we've referenced that book before in our own series on Revelation. I do highly recommend it. It's an academic work, but that's not going to scare people in this audience. It's quite a good book—very interesting—focused on the

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10:00

keys passages in the book of Revelation. But you do pick up on a lot of this stuff, which is why the way I prefaced this in Part 1 of our discussion... I said I get questions a lot on not only Old Testament, but Old and New Testament afterlife vocabulary. “Hey, what’s Gehenna? What’s the Lake of Fire? Is that the same as Tartarus? Is that the same as the Abyss? What’s Sheol?” All this sort of stuff, so when I sort of got it in my head that this is really worth some podcast time, I thought right away of Justin Bass. And that is why he spent the previous episode with us talking about this vocabulary. And we are going to resume it here, but Justin has spent a lot of time—devoted a lot of time—and certainly in writing has devoted considerable space to discussing all this stuff. So he is sort of the perfect person to have back on. So, Justin, thanks for coming back on, and we might as well just jump right into Gehenna. Again, for those of you who haven’t listed to Part 1, you really need to do that because we’re not going to rehearse Part 1 in Part 2. I mean, I’m sure there will be some overlap, but in Part 1 we talked about Sheol and Hades and the Abyss and Tartarus, and we might as well just jump right into Gehenna. So what’s Gehenna? I mean, where does the term come from and all these sorts of questions?

**JB:** Yeah, you know we talked a little bit on Part 1 about how some of the English translations of the Bible are very misleading, and I even have before me right now a great example. The NASB, I’m sure you agree, is one of the most wooden literal translations.

**MH:** Yeah.

**JB:** And I’m a huge fan of the NASB. You know, if I’m struggling with any passage in the original language, I’m going to grab the NASB and see what it’s saying. But even the NASB on 2 Peter 2:4 translates Tartarus there as “hell.”

**MH:** Yeah.

**JB:** So just why did they do that? [laughs] Why did they translate that “hell?” I have to find the person translating that.

**MH:** To give you something to write about later. [laughs]

**JB:** Exactly. So... and this happens a lot, you know. You have the same in Luke 16, and we talked about the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. And when it says, “The rich man lifted up his eyes in hell,” a lot of translations will put “hell” there even though in the Greek, again, it’s “Hades” and it’s not referring to what we would call the future eternal place of punishment, which the primary term for that in the New Testament (mainly on the lips of Jesus) is Gehenna. So when we talk about Gehenna, we’re basically talking about what we would say is the future hell. And interestingly, there is no one in Gehenna right now. You know, no souls,

no resurrected bodies. Gehenna is an empty place that is prepared for the devil and his angels.

**MH:** So it's an eschatological place.

**JB:** It's an eschatological realm that will in some way be parallel to the new heavens and the new earth—the new Jerusalem as pictured in Revelation. Because as we'll talk about, I think the Lake of Fire imagery in Revelation is the same as Gehenna. We see some very key parallels between the two conceptually in the New Testament. But Gehenna, you know, the background of it... It's just an actual place. It's really the Valley of Hinnom which is...

**MH:** *Gê hinnom*, yeah.

**JB:** Yeah, and so it just became this word “Gehenna,” but really it goes back to the Valley of Hinnom, which is a place that, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, is a place where a lot of wicked, evil things happened, especially with certain kings. Like, Manasseh is said to have sacrificed children there. And this just seemed to be one of those places that is a dark place, where I'm sure demons were heavily inhabiting because of so many evil practices that were being done there. And whether polytheistic or whether idolatry or actual physical sacrifices... all kinds of things you could read about in 2 Kings 23 and Jeremiah 7 (just some key passages that talk about it). But that seems to be the background, and that's why “Gehenna” for the Jewish world became the key term for the eschatological hell to come—because of all the wickedness that happened in this place.

**MH:** I have the Jeremiah passage here in front of me. I'll just read it for our audience just so they can fix this in their minds.

**<sup>31</sup> And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom,**

So you have valley (*gê*), and then *Hinnom* is the term there. *Gê Hinnom* is where Gehenna comes from.

**...to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind. <sup>32</sup> Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when it will no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter;**

It's a very dark place just to put it mildly.

15:00

**JB:** Yes, and again, this is the key term that Jesus used. I believe it is used 12 times in the New Testament; 11 of the times is by Jesus. The 12th time is by his brother. So James uses it once, and in James 3 he's talking about the fact that the tongue is set on fire by Gehenna. So that's just more in the way of a metaphorical use of it, but the way Jesus uses it primarily is, "This is where you who reject me, you who follow the path of wickedness, you who reject eternal life, this ultimately is where you will end up." This is, again, where the fire imagery comes from. The imagery goes before Jesus, but Jesus consistently will use fire—the fiery Gehenna—describing it as a place of fire. But he also describes it as a place where maggots are eating the flesh and things like that, so a lot of different imagery for just basically a horrific, miserable existence.

**MH:** Yeah, I mean, the fire obviously... The most obvious reference there is like I just read, passing children through the fire. I mean, this whole Old Testament... Not sanctioned by the Old Testament, obviously, but you read about it in the Old Testament—this practice in certain idolatrous contexts they were doing in this place (child sacrifice and whatnot). So it's a place of death and it's a place of suffering. Death and the suffering were caused by the burning, so that's the most obvious reference. But you might want to comment on... There's a lot of either other information or, some would say, mythology that has sort of accrued to this about a garbage dump and so on and so forth. Do you have any opinion on that as far as the fire origin and the fire description of Gehenna?

**JB:** Yeah, the idea of this garbage dump that is constantly on fire. I just haven't found the evidence for it.

**MH:** Yeah.

**JB:** It's just one of those things that you hear...

**MH:** You and a lot of other people.

**JB:** Yeah, you hear a lot of sermon illustrations without citing the sources. This is like that great one with the high priest had that rope tied around his foot.

**MH:** Oh, yeah, yeah. "I really want that to be real."

**JB:** I know. That's one of those that we want to be true! Or like when St. Nicholas punched... Who did he punch? He punched Arius. Santa Claus punching the heretic. You just want those stories to be true, but the evidence is just not forthcoming. So yeah, yeah, that's a common kind of myth on that.

**MH:** Yeah, we don't want anybody in the audience to misunderstand. I mean, Jesus isn't incorrect to invoke fire imagery here because you get it from the Old Testament.

**JB:** And I would even say, you know, Isaiah...I think the seeds are there, too, because you have that amazing parallel between the end of Isaiah and the end of Revelation. Because you have the new heavens and new earth in Isaiah 65, and then you have Isaiah ending on a real sour note with this fire that will not be quenched and looking out on all the dead bodies and the maggots and this unquenchable fire.

**MH:** Yeah, there's plenty of legit material to reference as far as the fiery descriptions, but like I said, I don't know where the garbage dump thing...I don't know how that all got started.

**JB:** Yeah, I don't know the origin of it. I think the late great Harold Hoehner from Dallas Seminary, he was the kind of person that would find these things. He found this course of material for the rope around the high priest's leg. It was some medieval Jewish writer. I can't remember the name, but I remember he found the source of that.

**MH:** Yeah, that does sound like something he would do. He would spend time on it. [laughter] So why do you think Jesus uses the term?

20:00 **JB:** Yeah, so I don't think Abraham's Bosom and some of these other terms that we've talked about and the imagery of the rich man and Lazarus and that parable—the cosmic geography... I don't think Jesus is being original here. I think he's using...If he's going to describe this future place of punishment where the wicked will go, where the devil and his angels will go, he's going to use the language that they are mostly familiar with. And we do see that this idea of Gehenna that goes back to this really hellish type of place that had all this wickedness... This was a common picture of that future place of punishment. So Jesus is using that common idea. Again, he uses some other terms like "eternal punishments." So one of the key places for the parallel Lake of Fire is his parable in Matthew 25, where he says (really fascinating)... He says to the wicked, "You will be thrown into this fire prepared for the devil and his angels." So it's really interesting because he says to the righteous, "You will come into the kingdom prepared for you." So you have this image of the righteous... The kingdom is prepared for them, but the damned, hell is not prepared for them; it's prepared for the devil and the angels and then they go there. So I think maybe it's because Christ's redemption, his blood, paid for all and so no one need go there. But those who go there, kind of like C.S. Lewis says, ultimately are rejecting. They're in a room locked from the door inside. So I always found that difference there. If you put them right there parallel in Matthew 25, he doesn't say "prepared for you" when he speaks to the damned. He brings in the devil and his angels. And, of course, the devil and his angels in Revelation 20 are thrown onto the Lake of Fire, and then at the end of Matthew 25 they go to eternal punishment (I think *kolasin*—the Greek word *aionion kolasin*). So the eternal punishment versus the *aionion zoe*, the eternal life.

**MH:** You know, even with the Lake of Fire there in Matthew 25:41 (the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels) and then you get the Lake of Fire language in Revelation... I mean, Jesus is also dipping into familiar material there because “prepared for the devil and his angels,” that’s going to come from Enoch. That’s very Enochian in its description there. There aren’t too many descriptions like it, but yeah, I mean, the fact that Jesus would use some of this familiar language shouldn’t surprise anybody.

**JB:** That’s right.

**MH:** I don’t know why... I mean, some are troubled by this. I’m sure you know this well—that, well, you know, “You guys are trying to bring in all this extra material in to understand the Bible.” Yeah, because it’s context. It’s context. Why wouldn’t you do that if it’s good enough for the Biblical writers, and in this case it’s good enough for Jesus to give us these contexts, then why shouldn’t we mention them now?

**JB:** Exactly.

**MH:** It doesn’t make any sense.

**JB:** It’s Peter bringing in Tartarus.

**MH:** Yeah.

**JB:** The fact that, again, Peter brings in Tartarus or Paul quotes the stoic philosophers or the Cretan from Titus. Again and again, we see the Biblical authors using... And even going back to the Old Testament, they’re using the Ancient Near Eastern imagery to redeem it and to show that it’s a vehicle for the truth of Biblical revelation, I think.

**MH:** Well, we should talk a little bit about...Let’s focus on the Lake of Fire. And I have some notes here about the background for that being Daniel 7:9-10. So Daniel 7 is going to be real familiar to the people in this audience, but let’s just get into that material a little bit.

**JB:** Yeah, that’s my thought, too. “Lake of Fire” is only used in Revelation six times, and even though it’s conceptually paralleled with Gehenna or the eternal fire or eternal punishment, the different ways that Jesus is referring to it... That the imagery that John is probably going off of is this picture in Daniel 7, specifically verses 9-10. I’ll read it from the NASB. He says:

**<sup>9</sup>“I kept looking  
Until thrones were set up,  
And the Ancient of Days took His seat;**

**His garment was white as snow,  
And the hair of His head like pure wool.  
His throne was ablaze with flames,  
Its wheels were a burning fire.  
<sup>10</sup> A river of fire was flowing  
And coming out from before Him;  
Thousands upon thousands were serving Him,  
And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;  
The court convened,  
And the books were opened.**

So you just had a lot of parallels there to that imagery in Revelation 20 because you have God seated on his throne, the books are open, there's judgment, angels are there, in Revelation 20 the resurrected righteous and wicked are there.

**MH:** Mm-hmm.

**JB:** And so I think this river of fire probably is what he's corresponding to the ultimate place of punishment that people will be thrown if their names are written in the Book of Life, the place prepared for the devil and his angels. This is that.

25:00

**MH:** Yeah and you go back into Daniel 7 and who's being judged there? Well, it's the beasts.

**JB:** Right.

**MH:** The chaos monsters are there.

**JB:** Right.

**MH:** So it would make sense.

**JB:** Verses 11 and 12, yeah. And then the kingdom that the Son of Man will have... All kingdoms give way to his kingdom. And so the eternal Lake of Fire has basically been inaugurated at that point at the end of Revelation 20, and then 21 and 22 is the kingdom of the Son of Man—God becoming all in all. It's the new heavens and the new earth that begins and will never end.

**MH:** So now it's pretty clear you're taking the view that hell—the Lake of Fire—is eternal. Do you have any specific reasons for going that direction? I mean, I get this question a lot in Q&A and I flip back and forth between what I would call the traditional view (the eternal everlasting fire view) and annihilation because the

tough part for me is the death of death. Then you get into all of these philosophical discussions. Well, if death is dead, well then how can people still be dying? You know, it's kind of a weird discussion, but it is still one that arises from some of the language in the text. So can you say a little bit about your view there?

**JB:** Yeah, I do take... Trust me, if I could be convinced by the text that the wicked will be annihilated, I will go with that because I do think it is one of the most difficult doctrines probably of Christianity. We talk about the problem of evil. I think the problem with eternal hell would be up there with things that are just really beyond us. I like what Tim Keller has said. In the past, I've heard him say we're on a need-to-know basis and so God has told us things and so we need to go off of what we know, but maybe when we get there things will be different.

**MH:** Yeah, you'll get answers to your questions, yeah.

**JB:** There will be some things that we don't... But I guess exegetically my argument would be Revelation 14—the fact that this is going to be a place where they have no rest day and night. Those who worship the beast and his image, the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever and the fact that that is the same language that is used at the end of Revelation 20 for Satan and the beast and the false prophet, that they have no rest day and night for ever and ever... Then again, if you parallel it with Matthew 25, the righteous go to eternal life (*aionion zoe*, eternal life) and then it's directly parallel with *aionion kolasin*, eternal punishment. So it just seems to me that if we're going to exist forever with the Father and the Son and the Spirit in this new heavens and new earth, then it would be strange in that same verse for *aionion* to mean some temporal place of punishment versus forever.

**MH:** The effect of it would still be atemporal. They're not going to come back to life. [laughs]

**JB:** Right.

**MH:** But yeah, it's a tough question and I don't do much directly as far as with apologetics, so I guess I wasn't aware that you feel that it is such an acute problem, like on the par with the problem of evil. But that is interesting to me to hear you say that.

**JB:** Yeah, in a way, I think for me personally... I can't speak in general.

**MH:** Okay.

**JB:** I just think for me personally, I would say it just seems like a bigger problem than the problem of evil because the problem of evil is for sure solved. If hell is

eternal, then it's just never solved. It goes on forever. The "Amazing Grace" hymn—10,000 years, right? At the end of that 10,000 years, they're still suffering in hell.

**MH:** Right, right.

**JB:** So the problem of evil is bad, but there's a solution. There's a restoration. Like Tolkien says in the *Lord of the Rings*, "Everything sad becomes untrue."

**MH:** Mm-hmm.

30:00

**JB:** So you have that great hope, but again, to bring in Dante, "Abandon all hope, you who enter here." That's the most terrifying thing to me. That's why I think Matthew 7:21 is probably the most terrifying passage in the Bible, "Away from me you evil doers. I never knew you." That to me is to be shut out from...And again, I don't think you're shut out completely from God because God is the one who keeps the fuel going in the Lake of Fire, but you're shut out from his mercy and his grace and his love. You're only there for his wrath and for his justice. So in some senses, scripturally, I understand it because the offense to an eternal God requires justly an eternal punishment, but I think just the eternality of it is what is difficult.

**MH:** Yeah. Now putting it that way I can see where you'd rank those two things together.

**JB:** And if I could quote...You brought up the issue of dying. This may give us all nightmares, but I find this text at the end of *The City of God* from Augustine one of the most profound things ever said on this. Of the second death (the same thing as the Lake of Fire), he says:

Nevertheless, with the help of the grace of our redeemer, we may be enabled to decline or avoid that second death. For that death, which means not the separation of soul from the body, but the union of both for eternal punishment is the more grievous death. It is the worst of all evils. There by contrast, men will not be in the situations of before death and after death, but always in death. And for this reason, they will never be living, never dead, but dying for all eternity. In fact, man will never be in in death in a more horrible sense than in that state where death itself will be deathless.

That one always gets me.

**MH:** Yeah. I've not heard that from Augustine before. Yeah.

**JB:** And again, it did seem to me...

**MH:** It's a tough doctrine because I don't know if I would agree with Augustine that death will be deathless because of the death of death in Revelation. But again, it goes back to the question of what does that mean? And the short answer is, I don't really know. [laughs]

**JB:** Yeah, and that's where I would fall. And that's where I would fall. And that's where to people, especially people who have had loved ones who have died who they believed were not in Christ... Especially as a pastor, I've counseled them... This is where I go with them on this kind of thing is I go, "Even though I'm not going to water this down, I'm not going to say I'm suddenly convinced."

**MH:** You can't give them assurance when you don't have it.

**JB:** Right. And I'm not going to suddenly say, "Oh yeah, I'm convinced of annihilationism" when I'm not. It's more of that kind of need-to-know that... And again, I point to just the mercy and the grace of Christ. I say, "If Jesus is on the throne bearing those wounds, he suffered hell himself on the cross." I think like Abraham said, "Will not the judge of the earth do right?" I completely give it all to him. I know that if Jesus is on that throne, the man who washed Judas' feet, he will do right. That's what I'm convinced of. Whatever hell it is, whatever that ultimately will be, I completely trust Jesus to do right.

**MH:** Yeah, it's part of his job description, not ours.

**JB:** That's right.

**MH:** Yeah. Let's try to end a little bit more positively. Let's go to Abraham's Bosom. This is in my notes. This is the one thing we haven't really hit on yet, but we said a little bit about Luke 16 in Part 1. But let's focus a little bit more on the good side here with Abraham's Bosom and Paradise. What's your take on this portion of Luke 16?

**JB:** Yeah, so, in Part 1 we talked about how Jesus is, I think, authenticating this fuller understanding of where we get seeds of it. In the Old Testament, we have the righteous and the wicked going to the underworld. Then in the intertestamental time, you have 1 Enoch 22 and Josephus and some other places where there is this fuller understanding of okay, there may be different chambers, different abodes. There may be a gulf separating where the wicked are and where the righteous are, and the experience of each is very different. Then Jesus tells this parable. And again, I think that the main point of the parable isn't to teach us this cosmic geography. I think the main point of the parable is dealing with the love of money. If you read the context of Luke 16, he is telling this parable to money-worshipping Pharisees, basically, and you get this image of this very rich man, kind of parallel to them. And he is clearly a Jewish man that

at that time they would have thought, if anybody's going to be in heaven, if anybody's going to be saved...

**MH:** Yeah, if anybody's blessed, it's this guy, yeah.

**JB:** It's going to be this guy. He had all the pomp and circumstance with his funeral. He had all this money. He's Jewish. He's the son of Abraham, and then Jesus places him in hellfire. Again, even I said it wrong! *Hades* fire, because he's not in the future hell.

**MH:** [laughs] Right.

35:00

**JB:** He's in this temporal punishment, but he pictures Abraham across this gulf in this realm that he refers to as Abraham's bosom. Again, I think this imagery is not original to Jesus. I think this just was a common way for the Jews to think that the good part of the next life would be you would be with the patriarchs. You'd definitely be with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I think it kind of parallels what Jesus says in Matthew 8 where he talks about how we will be seated in the kingdom at the table with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets. So to be in Abraham's Bosom... It's hard to be in a better place than that when you die.

**MH:** Right.

**JB:** If you're where Abraham is, you got it good. So as we talked about, I think the *Hades* there shouldn't be translated "hell." I think the best translation would be just "Hades" and maybe a note to explain what that is because it's this temporal place of punishment that is a place for souls of the wicked. And you have, again, the cosmic geography of another place, though, a place of water in it. And it's really Edenic. That's what cool about it is it is... Even some of the Church Fathers used the language of the Elysium Fields of the Greeks. And then the Jewish imagery, of course, would be Eden. And with Eden you have water, you have springs of water, and this is the kind of imagery you get in the Enoch passage and in Josephus. It's a very Edenic-like place. And interestingly, "Garden of Eden" in the Greek translation of the Hebrew gets translated as "Paradesos."

**MH:** Mm-hm, yeah.

**JB:** This is where Paradise becomes a very theologically-loaded term. The origin of it is more just parks—just beautiful parks and places of vineyards and like a walled area with fruit and water and springs of water and things like that. I think it goes back to how the Persians and the Greeks used it this way.

**MH:** It does. Yeah, there's royalty imagery there, too, even from the Old Testament and the Assyrians. I don't know what episode it was in the podcast.

One time we did an episode on Jesus as the Gardener and we got into this Paradise language. It's actually very interesting.

**JB:** Oh, it's so rich.

**MH:** We showed how it's associated with kingship and Edenic Paradise, the trees, the whole bit. It's one of those things it's really easy to read right over, but there's so much packed into it.

**JB:** Yeah, it's so rich. So my argument (and this isn't an argument that a lot have made—again, for it to be consistent, which I think it is, it's demanded), which is Paradise... I see it in the New Testament as more of an adaptable state of being, in the sense of "this is where Christ is." This is ultimately where Jesus is—Paradise. And of course, it's going to have all the Edenic imagery along with it, but ultimately it's a more transferable term versus the others. So my argument with that is basically the criminal on the cross (probably a guy that fought against Rome or something, he didn't just steal pears or something)...

**MH:** Mm-hmm.

**JB:** He asked Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom," and then Jesus gives him... Like he does with all of us, he gives far more than he asked. He says, "This very day, today, you will be with me," and then he says, "in Paradise." And again, to parallel it with the descent imagery, if he really did go with Jesus that very day somewhere when they died, it would have been Abraham's Bosom. It would have been. So I think Paradise in that text is the same as Abraham's Bosom—this Edenic-like place. This criminal on the cross gets the honor of being with Jesus as he enters that realm and possibly with, again, rescuing them from their proclaiming...

**MH:** Right.

**JB:** Maybe this is when he proclaimed the gospel, like 1 Peter 4:5 says, "He proclaimed the gospel to those who are now dead." This may be what that is talking about. And the "with me" part is what I think is key for Paradise because Paradise is used two more times in the New Testament and both times it's another distinct place, which in 2 Corinthians 12 it's the third heaven and that's where Jesus is in that context. Then in Revelation 2 it's the ultimate fulfillment of Paradise, which is the new heavens and the new earth—the New Jerusalem. So you see the transfer of the locale, but I think what is consistent about all three is that Jesus is in all three places.

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**MH:** Yeah, so you have him and the criminal—the thief—going into the afterlife, again, a positive afterlife—Abraham's bosom. In that afterlife place, Jesus is visiting other places, too.

**JB:** Right.

**MH:** Is that just a rough sketch of what you're saying there?

**JB:** Exactly. Yeah, I think he did go other places. I don't know if he took the criminal with him to those other places. [laughs]

**MH:** Well, right. There would be no reason to take him down to where the Watchers are to tell them they're still doomed.

**JB:** That's right. I think he ended up getting that awesome introduction with all the saints of old in the blessed place of the underworld, and then whenever they ultimately were taken... probably at the ascension when they were all ultimately taken to the locale of heaven, that is when he would have gone there. But yeah, that would have been the first thing that they would have experienced, I think, is that. And that is why "today" would be literally fulfilled in that sense. And that is why I think you have to equate that for Luke... For Luke's understanding, when he says Paradise, he is bringing in all that Edenic imagery and the hope of the Messiah to open those gates and to remove the cherubim and to let man back into Paradise. And the criminal—this guy—incredibly, he is given the first entrance to this place. But Abraham's Bosom doesn't actually become Paradise until Jesus is there. And that's why he says, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

**MH:** Mm-hmm.

**JB:** And so I like that imagery. It's a way to make sense of the three different uses of the term.

**MH:** Well, it would. So you haven't found that in many commentators? Because it does help make sense of things.

**JB:** I have to go back. If I did, I referenced them in the book. I know what I find a ton is even for commentators like one of my favorites, Joachim Jeremias, he wrote a lot of the TDNT articles for Paradise. He wrote it for Hades. He wrote it for the Abyss. And he argues strongly. He has some great discussions on the descent, and he argues for the descent. I'm right with him on everything, but see he says... But this seems like a contradiction because Jesus goes to Paradise on this day, not the underworld. But see if Paradise is the Abraham's Bosom, then it solves the problem immediately. So that's what I found a lot is like Jeremias, I found people struggling with that problem, but not solving it and that's how I...

**MH:** When I come across stuff like that, it makes me wonder why it didn't occur to other writers.

**JB:** I agree. Yeah, and I'm sure other people agreed with that, but there weren't many. This was definitely a... This is a minority view, but I think if it is explained this way, then I think it should convince especially anybody who agrees with the descent. I think it explains it.

**MH:** Yeah, well it has explanatory power. Yeah.

**JB:** Yeah.

**MH:** I like things that have explanatory power in more than just one place, you know, that you can get this ripple effect and build this consistency across the board. So I find that appealing.

**JB:** And a great background passage just for those in your audience, they can go and read the Testament of Levi. If you have the Charlesworth two volumes of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, you can grab that and look up Testament of Levi, chapter 18. That's where you have this amazing passage, and it seems to be pre-Christ that this was written.

**MH:** Mm-hmm.

**JB:** And it's talking about how the Messiah will open the gates to Paradise. He will remove the barrier for man to Paradise. And so Jesus fulfills that very thing.

**MH:** Well, that's interesting. Before we wrap up, I do want to ask, in the course of our discussions, you (I think rightly so) have corrected a lot of what people run into in their English translations. How do you usually handle that with people? I mean, do you get any pushback on that when you discuss this or other topics? I mean, I've found that sometimes people feel like they can't understand their Bibles or whatever. What note of encouragement would you give as far as being able to tap into some of this stuff and penetrate beyond the English that they have?

**JB:** Yeah, it's a great question. When I taught Greek at Dallas Seminary for many semesters, one of the things I would like to say to inspire them and to get them excited (of course, I'm a big movie buff)... I always say, you know, reading the English translations you're going to get the main thing. You're going to get the gist. You're going to get salvation. You're going to get theology. You're going to get a full understanding of what's going on. You're not going to miss the big things if you're only reading it in the translations—assuming you're reading, of course, a good translation. I'm not talking about *The Message*, of course, but as long as you're reading a good English translation, you're going to get the thing. But I parallel it to like... It's more like a DVD at this point. If you watch a DVD movie compared to the 4K... Like if you watch *Lord of the Rings* on an old DVD movie versus watching it on Blu-ray or even the 4K on HBO Max on a big screen,

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that would be to me the difference between reading English and reading it in the original languages. When you read it in the original languages, just like on the 4K, you're starting to see things that you never saw because some of those details were so grainy that you couldn't see it as clearly. So that's why I encourage... And there are a lot of ways to do it. You know, they have the Blue Letter Bible. There's a lot of ways to learn some basic concepts and basic terms— key terms.

**MH:** NET Bible is available for free.

**JB:** NET Bible is excellent. They are largely... Pretty much all their notes, as you know, are dealing with the Hebrew and the Greek and so an excellent resource. There are so many great resources, even if you don't ever learn the original languages. But I think my main encouragement, though, is if you're reading NIV, NASV, ESV, NET... If you're reading through those Bibles and you're in the Bible on a regular basis, I wouldn't say you're missing anything of *essential* value, but you are maybe missing, like, "Tartarus."

**MH:** Sure.

**JB:** These things are still important if you want to go as deep as you can to understand every jot and tittle, which we do. You want to understand every aspect of the scriptures and to approach it and understand it as best as we can to rightly divide the Word. I think it's worth going to the original language, but I think there should be the encouragement that you're ultimately not missing the biggest things, of course.

**MH:** Yeah, yeah, I would agree. I mean, all of the essentials are going to be readily apparent to somebody who is a serious reader of an English Bible. I always like to say the best English Bible is the one you'll actually read.

**JB:** That's right.

**MH:** I would tend to agree with your comment about paraphrases. I don't really like paraphrases...

**JB:** Yeah.

**MH:** ...or translations that are so idiosyncratic and usually done by one person and stuff like that.

**JB:** And they really do show their bias. I joke about *The Message*, but even like the New Living Translation. A lot of people use that in churches, and I find the New Living Translation to be in a lot of places just really more of a paraphrase than actually...

**MH:** That's because it was trying to make the Living Bible less of a paraphrase.

**JB:** Right.

**MH:** But it's still on the same turf in some respects.

**JB:** And that's what I would encourage people to do, especially like we said, having a good study Bible, which I think the best study Bibles out there are the Net Study Bible, the ESV study Bible, there's an NIV Study Bible, and there's actually a King James Study Bible that I found because it was the first time I ever went through the King James... It's a scholarly version. A lot of DTS professors were involved in it. That's what I would encourage—not only getting Bibles with great notes, but just reading through different translations. Don't just read through the same translation, because maybe you *will* miss... If you only read NASB, for example, even though you're getting the goods on most everything else, you'd never know about Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4), or you'd think it was hell. So reading different translations will open your eyes to new things. I always said when I first read the New Testament and the Old Testament in the original languages, it was like reading it almost like for the first time in a lot of ways because I was seeing so many new things. So I think that can happen also with reading other translations.

**MH:** Yeah. Yeah, and the same thing will happen to you if you read the Septuagint as well. There will just be new things in there that you never would have run into before.

**JB:** That's right.

**MH:** Well, that's good. Go ahead.

**JB:** No, I was going to say and that's where the New Testament writers many times are drawing from the Septuagint. I agree with someone who said that the Septuagint is one of the best things to read as a background to the New Testament.

**MH:** Yeah, it is. Well, I'm glad we could do this again and I think our listeners will find it informative and stimulating. This is what we try to do in the podcast, expose people to how academics look at the Bible and how they go through it. But again, we try to get people on when have guests who have a high view of scripture, they do good scholarship, have a high view of the text, and want to do something deliberate to try to make this information decipherable to the normal person in the pew. So thanks again for coming on.

50:00

**JB:** Thank you. I'm so honored to be here again with you and so thankful for your work.

**TS:** Another great conversation with Dr. Bass, and I'm glad we ended it on a high note there with Paradise because the first episode and the first half of this one is doom and gloom. But at least we got some positively going there at the end.

**MH:** It gets depressing.

**TS:** Yeah. Anything else? I mean, can you give me like you did in the last episode, just a quick summary of kind of what we talked about?

**MH:** Yeah. I think it's important... Again, we talked about Gehenna and the Lake of Fire and Abraham's Bosom, also referred to as Paradise here. And I think it's important, to recognize that Jesus is using vocabulary that is going to be familiar to his hearers and, ultimately, when it gets written down in the New Testament, ultimately it is going to be known to readers. He is not just sort of freewheeling something, but he is going with what is familiar to them to communicate these ideas. I kind of like Justin's take on the way he linked up Abraham's Bosom and Paradise there because it does help, I think, answer the question of what happens with the thief on the cross and the descent—if you believe that Jesus actually descended into the underworld and then preached to the spirits in prison in 1 Peter 3. That would be the Watchers—the sinning angels of Genesis 6. And then he delivered sinners more generally when he rose from the dead. All this stuff can be confusing, but it can fit together. So I kind of appreciated the way he did that.

**TS:** We appreciate it. It was a great conversation over both episodes and again, please, please, please go visit our sponsor, [logos.com/nakedbible](https://logos.com/nakedbible) to help support the show. We appreciate Dr. Justin Bass coming on and talking to us and we want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.