Naked Bible Podcast Transcript
Episode 445
Q&A 57
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Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions:

- Has Paul's spirit left his body in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5? [1:35]
- Is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil what the Sumerians would call a "me?" [3:45]
- Is it possible that only males are created in the image of God? [7:20]
- Is the message from the Garden in Eden, and the events or message in the Garden of Gethsemane, in any way related? [10:00]
- Is there any evidence that names were given to people retroactively? [10:55]
- Is "persuasion" a proper translation of *pistis* and does it cancel out the implication of loyalty? [16:50]
- Is the leviathan the same being that is in the Garden of Eden and also the dragon in Revelation? [22:20]
- Could the 3-day journey from Egypt to Sinai just be an idiom for a completed journey that actually took longer? [24:25]
- Who are the thieves and robbers that Jesus is referring to in John 10:7-8? [25:25]
- Do scholarly historians in secular settings use scripture as a staple resource for historical research and context? What other ancient resources are used? [27:25]

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 445, our 57th Q&A. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he is the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing?

MH: Oh, not too bad. It's been a bit of a rough week, but right now I feel pretty good.

TS: I know you're doing good and, Mike, you started radiation. How's that going?

MH: Yeah, well that's the issue. It makes me nauseous. So I've had some problems with that more than usual, but right now I feel okay. It's just I go in for

the treatment a couple hours from now from the time we're recording this. So it'll probably be kicking my butt a little bit later.

TS: And then after that you get a new scan to see what it's done?

MH: Yeah. Yeah, they'll give me a knew MRI sometime thereafter and they'll see what it did.

TS: Alright. Perfect. Sounds good, Mike. Well alright. Well, why don't we just go ahead and jump into these questions and knock them out if you don't mind.

MH: Okay.

TS: Alright, here we go. Our first two questions are from P and the first one is:

1:35
> **What is going on in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5? It sounds like Paul's spirit is actually remotely present. Is this something similar to Peter's angel when he escapes prison?**

MH: No, back in Acts 12 and Peter's angel… The text tells us that, for one thing. Paul is just using an expression in 1 Corinthians 5. Let me just read this so that people have it in their heads. It says:

> **³ For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.**

And I don't know any other way to put it. It's just an expression. I mean, I can say right now, "I'll be with you guys in spirit," but that doesn't mean that my spirit is going to leave my body and there's going to be a disembodied me somewhere else. It's just an expression of fidelity, but that's all Paul doing here. We know this because he actually says, "For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment." So he knows he is not actually present. But then later on in verse 9, he talks about writing to them in a previous letter. Then in verse…Let's see. Let me back up a little bit. 1 Corinthians 4:19:

> **¹⁹ But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power.**

²¹ What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

So he tells them twice he is not there. He tells them twice he is going to come and see them. Then we get this expression, "I am with you in spirit." So that is really all that its going on. There's nothing weird or paranormal going on.

TS: Alright, P's second question is:

3:45   **Is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil what the Sumerians would call a "me?" Some of the ancient works have trees being called "me's." While I don't think they are referring to the same trees, I do wonder if it would be proper to view this tree in Genesis as a "me?"**

MH: The short answer is no. It's a two-letter word. "Me" in Sumerian is an abstract concept or an abstract noun. I have an article open here and the article is entitled…It's by Jacob Klein. The title is "Sumerian ME as a Concrete Object" and it's from some scholarly journal (*Altorientalische Forschungen* 24:2, 1997). Klein writes this. He says:

> It is a common knowledge that [MH: at least to those who do Sumerian stuff] "me" is an abstract noun referring to cultic cultural political or social institutions, norms, laws, functions, attributes, etc.

5:00   In other words, the Sumerian me, referring to just about any… Again, it's an abstract concept that is really unfamiliar to us. If you're thinking something like Plato's Forms, that might get you in the ballpark, but it's not that either. Back to Klein. He says:

> However, the precise meaning of this abstract concept is elusive, and therefore it has been subjected to many different translations.

In other words, how do translators describe what is meant by "me?" It's not very easy. It's actually pretty difficult. So Klein continues:

> It raises serious difficulties. Consequently, it has been suggested by Gragg [MH: another author] that in the course of its development, "me" seems to have acquired concrete connotations – perhaps those of the symbols connected with the persons, places, or institutions.
>
> In the present paper, I will try to demonstrate that the term "me" occasionally refers neither to the abstract concept, not to a concrete object, connected with it,

but to a two-dimensional symbol or image, engraved or painted on a sign, a banner, or a standard, representing the underlying abstract concept.

And I'll close the quote there. But basically the "me" is a very foreign concept to us. It could be used of almost anything in Sumerian culture: cultural, political or social institutions, normal, laws, functions, attributes, so on and so forth. So there's no way to pin it to a tree necessarily, although it could. It could refer to a tree because a tree is in that list—again, just basically almost everything. But to use that and say "this is the tree of life" is just way off the mark. The two things really have nothing to do with each other.

TS: Our next question is from Ruth in the San Francisco Bay Area.

7:20

I recently listened to episode 86 of the Naked Bible Podcast regarding head coverings and 1 Corinthians 11:7 jumped out at me: "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man." Looking at the various Bibles I have on hand, I see that Genesis 1:26 is listed as a cross-reference for the verse, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" I had always understood Genesis 1:26-27 as conveying that females are in God's image, too, but is there perhaps some ambiguity in the Hebrew so that it could be interpreted as saying in effect that females are created by God just as males are, but only males are actually created in God's image? And doesn't 1 Corinthians 11:7 suggest that only males can be considered to be God's human imagers?

MH: Yeah, well the short answer to those two questions is "no" and "no." There is really no ambiguity here. The Old Testament text in Genesis 1:27 is crystal clear. The Hebrew word *adam* is "made as God's imager" and it has to be humankind because *adam* is qualified in Genesis 1:27 as both male and female. There's no ambiguity there. Both male and female are *adam*. They are humankind. So Genesis 1:27 is not about Adam, the male, because he's not male and female; he's male. And Paul is going to be aware of all this. In Genesis 1:27, he is going to be just as aware of it as we are. He is not going to contradict it. The patriarchalism of the Bible is about social status, not ontology—not what a person is intrinsically. Children (male or female for instance) are viewed as lesser in social status to adults. But again, we're dealing with social status, not ontology. You should note as well that 1 Corinthians 11:7 does not say that the woman is the image of man. It doesn't say that. It doesn't say that the woman is the *image* of the man, but the *glory* of man. It never says woman was created after man's image. That wording just isn't there. By default, with Genesis, all of humankind is in the image of God.

TS: Scott from Amarillo, Texas, asked:

10:00

> **Is the message from the Garden in Eden, and the events or message in the Garden of Gethsemane, in any way related?**

MH: Yeah, the key here is the phrase "in any way related." I think, personally, we're meant to see Jesus' acts and events in gardens generally as playing off the Old Testament motif of gardens as both the dwelling place of deity and also as a feature of the household estates of kings in the Old Testament (and then in the Ancient Near Eastern more broadly). We actually discussed all of that in episode 335 – Jesus as the Gardener. So I'm just going to refer that episode to Scott from Amarillo. Episode 335—Jesus as the Gardener—goes into this a lot.

TS: Wesley was wondering about names in the Old Testament. The first question is (he's got two):

10:55

> **As you know, people's names have meaning beyond just the word itself. Often they are closely tied to their character, physical attributes, or even future calling. My question is, is there any evidence that names were given to a person retroactively? Do names continue to gain even more meaning over time as well or built upon brick by brick, like Jesus' name being closely related to Joshua, but obviously better, and then being talked about in Hebrews as an inherited name that is better than even divine beings' names?**

MH: Well, boy, this is a good example of a thesis question. I'll go out and get another degree and write my dissertation on this [laughs] and then come back and answer it. Fortunately, there are such books that already exist about names and Biblical names and things like that. Generally, for sure, with place names there are changes, and you get this sort of retroactive feel to it. For instance, in Genesis 19:21, the place where Lot and his family flee is referred to as *Mitsar*, which means "small and significant." Then the name of the place gets referred to from here on after as Zoar. So *Mitsar* and Zoar are related. They are related terms. So in that instance, you could see where it would be retroactive. Place names also get changed. So Jerusalem's original name wasn't Jerusalem. It was Jebus. Then it gets changes once David takes the place, or there is actually a dispute over when Jerusalem's name was changed and how to understand the relationship between Jebus and *Yerusalem*, but it's a long, convoluted topic. But again, I'm just using it as an example.

This happens with people. People get their names changed. The most obvious ones are Jacob and Israel. Jacob gets changes to Israel. Saul gets changed to Paul and so on and so forth. It is much harder to tell with birth names. In Jacob's case, it could easily be assigned to Providence—that God knew what kind of person Jacob was going to be, and so on and so forth. That's not always that

easy to tell. I am just going to just give by way of a better answer to this (or potentially a better answer to this)… I am going to give Wesley a few studies here. Because again, I'm not going to go out and write a thesis to answer this question, very obviously, but there are those who have devoted book-length studies to Biblical names. So I found this list in the article here I have in front of me by Marks, and the article is entitled "Biblical Naming and Poetic Etymology." It is from the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Volume 114:11 (1995). This may be accessible publicly now. I'm not quite sure, but it's "Biblical Naming and Poetic Etymology."

In his first footnote, he notes some comprehensive surveys of Biblical names. So I'm going to give you the ones in English. There's a book by Burke Long: *The Problem of Etiological Narratives in the Old Testament.* Now that's the book title. Etiological narratives is when someone or something gets a name and it sort of tells the story or reflects the story about itself. So, again, there's a whole book on that: *The Problem of Etiological Narratives in the Old Testament.* There's another dissertation by Allen Ross. Allen Ross used to teach at Dallas Seminary as well, back in the day, and he did his Cambridge dissertation on paronomasia. That has something to do with it. (That's just a technical term. It has something to do with Biblical names and name-calling.) "Paronomasia and Popular Etymology in the Naming Narratives of the Old Testament." There is another dissertation: Russell Cherry, "Paronomasia and Proper Names in the Old Testament: Rhetorical Function and Literary Effect." That is a Southern Baptist Theological Seminary dissertation. More recently there is a book by Moseh Garsiel called *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Medrashic Derivations and Puns*. So here you get into punning which, of course, is going to crop up in familiar Old Testament stories as well.

So, again, the short answer is yeah, you can have these sorts of changes, but how will we know it's retroactive unless we're told in the text that, "Well this was the name at one point, and this is the name now going forward." In other words, the text would have to tell you that it's being done retroactively. You can't just guess that and then say, "Well, I must be right about this because it makes sense." Again, we try to be text-driven here, and so the text itself would have to tell you this. But it takes us into the whole field of why things get named the way they do and sort of the rhetorical function—the literary function—of naming in the Hebrew Bible. And again, they are good resources for this. There are book-length studies, and for the sake of a podcast that is about the best we can do here.

TS: The question is from Sarah.

16:50   **Is "persuasion" a proper translation of *pistis* and does it cancel out the implication of loyalty?**

15:00 (left margin marker)

MH: Well, "persuasion" is not a proper translation of *pistis*. If you just… For one thing, Biblical words are like any other words. They don't have any meaning in and of themselves. The meaning is from the context. Every word has sort of a semantic range of options and *pistis* is no different there than any other word. I mean, if you just look up some passages where it occurs, like Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." So really, are we supposed to say, "Without being persuaded, it is impossible to please God?" I mean, Hebrews 11:6 actually defines faith. Let me just quote it here. This is going to be ESV so I don't want to mess it up.

> **6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.**

So it doesn't say "for whoever would draw near to God must be persuaded that he exists." Persuaded and believed there are kind of close, but this notion of sort of being talked into it or debated into it, I think, is really wrong here. Romans 3:22 is sort of another example. Look at Romans 3:22:

> **22 …the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.**

So really? The righteousness of God through persuasion in Jesus Christ? I mean, it doesn't even sound normal. It sounds actually kind of weird. I don't know what source this idea is coming from, but it's not a good one. I don't know of a single academic Biblical studies lexicon or commentary that is going to make this equation of linkage. The verb equivalent of *pistis* is *pisteuo,* which no one disagrees means "to believe." That's the verb equivalent—*pistis*/*pisteuo*; they come from the same word family. It has nothing to do with works or persuading someone. Again, whatever word study or whatever resource that this is being relied upon, you can sort of safely put down and not use again.

A lot of stuff like this, I have found, comes off the internet. The internet has a few Biblical studies resources and none of them are very good. I hate to say that, but I have to be honest with the audience. The resources that biblical scholars use are not free resources on the internet. That is not where the scholarly material goes. It's not where the academic material goes. It's not where the peer-reviewed material goes. It doesn't go to the internet. Whoever creates these sites, they are
20:00   doing the best they can. I don't want to poo-poo them unnecessarily, but you have to realize if you're going to do serious Bible study, you need to start investing in real sources—stuff that's not free on the internet.

I'll add one more thought. If you were to get, again, some good resources for New Testament, I would recommend the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegeses*. It's a four- or five-volume set. It's an expanded (what I call) discussion lexicon. A lexicon is just like a dictionary, but there are some that are made where the words are not just listed in English

glosses. English possible meanings aren't just listed, you get full-blown scholarly discussions of each word. And that's what the NIDNTTE is. If you actually looked up *pistis* there, you would find the way that the resource arranges the material is that it will group *pistis* with the rest of the words in its sort of family. So you'd have an entry on *pisteuo* (that's the verb "to believe" or "to trust"). *Pistis* would be in there. *Pistos*, which means trustworthy or faithful… I mean, you can't even convert that to a persuasion adjective. Persuasion-worthy? Persuasion-full? I don't even know how you do it. But *pistos* is in there. *Pistoo* means "to make trustworthy," and you get antonyms as well. *Apistos* which means "unbelieving" or "unbelievable" or "faithless." *Apistia* is "unbelief." *Apisteo*,"to disbelieve." You see all these words? They all have the same thing in common. It's the p-i-s-t, *pist*, element in the word. They all come from the same word family. The word for "to be persuaded" is *peitho*. *Pistis* has no relationship etymologically to *peitho*. So again, I would have to firmly disagree here and just say we need to be using better resources.

TS: Our next question is from Joel.

22:20

> **Is the leviathan the same being that is in the Garden of Eden and also the dragon in Revelation? The core verse my question regards is Isaiah 27:1, but Job 41:33-34 also seems to support this idea and so I wanted some clarity and to hear if this is also part of a theology that is not as well-known or talked about?**

MH: Well a leviathan isn't a real creature for one thing. So that's going to make it quite different than the serpent (the *nachash)* in Genesis 3. Because we find out in scripture later on (much later on in the New Testament) that the "dragon," the serpent, is Satan and the only way to put those two things together is to do (as I have insisted and taken criticism for)… That the serpent, the snake, in Genesis 3 is not just an animal. It's not a mere animal, it's a supernatural being in that form or in that guise in the story because this being is also cursed and this being's seed will have an adversarial relationship with the seed of the woman who is ultimately the messiah. Okay, none of that applies to the leviathan. Leviathan isn't a real being or a real creature. Leviathan is a mythological concept or a symbol of chaos. It represents chaos. The scripture does use a variety of serpentine images for chaos and then chaos agents, that's true. But the one in Genesis 3 is presented as a personal supernatural enemy to God, whereas the others are more like just symbols. Leviathan will be a symbol of anti-Eden—everything that is sort of oppositional to God and God's world and the way God wants things. So then there's some overlap there conceptually in terms of the symbolic value, but in ontological terms, they are not the same thing.

TS: Taylor in Como, Mississippi:

24:25 **I have listened to the podcast, The Exodus Series, and Dr. Heiser read the three-day journey as literal and thus limiting the possible location of Mt. Sinai. I have often read/heard that a three-day journey is just an idiom for a long journey or a complete journey, as opposed to a journey that took 2 plus 1 or 4 minus 1 days. Can you comment on this?**

25:00 **MH**: Well, there's not too much I can say about this because I'd need to see examples of that outside Exodus before I would consider it a possible way to interpret Exodus. In other words, what are the actual examples where a three-day journey is more than three days, and that we know that reading scripture? Without having examples of that… I don't know if Taylor has any, but without examples, there's not much I can say to that other than I want to see examples.

TS: Samuel has our next two questions and the first one is:

25:25 **Who are the thieves and robbers that Jesus is referring to in John 10:7-8:**

MH: Yeah, let's just read the passage. John 10:7-8:

> **[7] So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. [8] All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. [MH: and verse 9] [9] I am the door.**

Okay, this is a very famous passage. So if you consider the passage, the phrase "all those who came before me…" If we could sort of focus in on that a little bit, that would suggest that the persons involved, the "thieves and robbers," were previous false messiahs—previous people who claimed to be the messiah and were not. Historically, we know there were such people before the advent of Jesus. I mean, it is just a matter of Second Temple Jewish historical record that there were those who claimed to be messiah. So it *could* point to those individuals specifically; however, if the phrase refers to the strangers in the preceding verses… If we go back to the beginning of John 10 and look at it that way, if the phrase refers to the strangers (and that is the terminology that John uses in the preceding verses), then it seems better to take the reference to "thieves and robbers" as the false shepherds—those who are strangers to the sheep in the passage, which would in turn be a slam against the scribes and Pharisees more specifically. So I think you have a couple interpretive options there, either one or the other. I would probably land on the scribes and the Pharisees. I think the context is a little tighter. But it could be the former: false messiahs who preceded Jesus.

TS: Samuel also wants to know:

27:25   **Do scholarly historians in secular settings use scripture as a staple resource for historical research and context? What other written resources are used as primary sources for historical education in the academic world?**

MH: Yeah, most do not. They argue (and I think very inconsistently) that the Bible's religious nature makes it a lesser source or invalidates it as a historical source, at least as a source that you would use as a starting point for historical inquiry anyway. And I say that is very inconsistent because throughout the ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman world, you have writers writing things and the writers are inherently religious. For instance, if I could pull out a document, like the treaty between Ramses and the Hittites or something like Ramses' account of the Battle of Kadesh, where he invokes his god and credits

30:00   his god with delivering him and with his victory... It's laced with Egyptian religious stuff, but historians take it completely at face value. In other words, the religious elements of ancient Near Eastern material and Greco-Roman material do not rule out the historical value of the document for historians, but they seem to change their tune (and regularly) when it comes to the Bible. I think that's because the Bible is a little bit different than these other sources. The Bible insists on (how do I want to say it?)… You owe something to it. It insists on personal accountability for your life. If the Bible's real, then there's some personal accountability issues that are involved, spiritually speaking, where these other sources would not make on a person's life. So I tend to think that is really what is lurking behind the non-use of the Bible. Again, if they're being consistent, practically everything in the ancient Near Eastern world is laced with religious talk. Monumental inscriptions, primary sources of all types, historical annals, historical itineraries…These are the sorts of things—king lists—that would go into reconstructing history in the ancient world. And a lot of that material is going to be inherently religious in flavor. And if the religion doesn't invalidate those documents as historical sources for historians, I don't see why the Bible should either. But again, I'm trying to be consistent and a lot of historians are not, just to put it simply.

TS: Alright, Mike, we appreciate you taking the time to answer our questions and that's all that we have for this week. So why don't you go get some rest?

MH: Yeah, well, I'll try to do that. I'll try to do the best job we can getting better.

TS: Alright, sounds good. Alright and with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.