

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 477

1 Samuel 28

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Episode Summary

Saul is afraid of the Philistines and seeks guidance from God, but God does not answer him. Saul then disguises himself and goes to a medium in Endor to ask her to bring up the spirit of Samuel. The medium is able to summon Samuel, who tells Saul that God has rejected him as king and that he and his sons will die in battle the next day. Saul is greatly troubled by this news and returns to his camp.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 477: 1 Samuel 28. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin and he's the scholar, Dr. Ronn Johnson. Hey, Ronn! How ya doing?

RJ: Hi Trey! Very well, thank you.

TS: Good, good. This is your last time with us here on chapter 28, so we appreciate you...

RJ: That's right, 1 Samuel 28.

TS: We appreciate you coming on and helping us out.

RJ: We'll be bringing 1 Samuel to a close pretty soon here.

TS: Well, we certainly appreciate you filling in. Wish it was under better circumstances, but we're just grateful that you took time to help us out here.

RJ: You're very welcome. My pleasure to be here.

TS: Well, I'm ready if you are!

RJ: I sure am, yeah.

Let's jump into 1 Samuel 28. The day has come when the Philistines are going to make another attack on Israel. What's interesting is how far north the Philistines have come. They are usually down on the southwest side of Israel, down by

Gaza. And here they are all the way up into the Valley of Jezreel. So it kind of opens with an odd moment in Israel's history, when the Philistines have been able under King Saul to push this far north. And that's where the story starts.

Let's just work through it verse by verse and just watch a very fascinating story unfold. It does remind me of the *Ghost* movie with Whoopi Goldberg (that movie feel) as we go through this.

In 28:3, Samuel had died (that's back in 25:1) and all Israel had lamented for him and buried him in Ramah (in his own city) and Saul had put the mediums and spiritists out of the land. Mediums and spiritists are a pair of Hebrew words that usually work together (some 20 times in the Old Testament). They're always considered the enemy when it comes to how God has considered someone who deals in the realm of the supernatural. When it comes to Yahweh, of course, he will be a jealous God that does not want people to have communion with what seemed to be rebellious spirits. So we'll talk more about that later when we get there in the story. But in the beginning of the story, it says that Saul had put them out of the country, out of the land. That seems to have been a political move at best, because when we get to verse 9, we still have one and she is just laying low; she's underground. So they're still there. I think it was just a half-hearted move at best.

Verse 4:

⁴ Then the Philistines gathered together, and came and encamped at Shunem. So Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped at Gilboa.

Here's one of those places in Israel where you can literally sit and read this story on site. Shunem is in the west end of the Valley of Jezreel, and the Philistines are encamped thus in the valley. And Saul and Israel there at the city of Gilboa (which is just a few miles northwest of the Mount of Gilboa where he will die in chapter 31)... The point is that both of these armies are in plain view of each other. And when night falls, of course, everyone in that world would go to sleep and the guards would set watch. Verse 5:

⁵ When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. ⁶ And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord [Yahweh] did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.

We've seen this before back in chapter 23, where Saul is not just having a bad day or a sinful day, he's... Again, I don't think he's a Yahwist, and thus there is no immediate communication between him and Yahweh. They're just not on speaking terms. Even if Saul wants something, Yahweh is basically saying "no."

Even through the voice of a prophet, Yahweh would say "no" in this instance.
Verse 7:

**7 Then Saul said to his servants, "Find me a woman who is a medium [RJ: same word used back in verse 3], that I may go to her and inquire of her."
And his servants said to him, "In fact, *there is* a woman who is a medium at En Dor."**

Now the city of Endor is a little village on the other side north of the Philistine army—just around the corner, as it were, by Mount Tabor there. So as you sit in Gilboa and tell this story (as I have done) or listen to this story being read, you can see... Well, you can't see Endor, but you know exactly where it is and you can imagine Saul and his two servants putting on garb that night, sneaking across enemy lines, and going to find this woman who will give him information from the divine world that's not from Yahweh. Okay? Verse 8:

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8 So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, "Please conduct a séance [RJ: it's the same word for "spiritist" in Hebrew] for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you."

9 Then the woman said to him, "Look, you know what Saul [RJ: she doesn't know who she's talking to] has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?"

In other words, she's saying, "I'm in an illegal trade here. People (including your servants, of course... this is how this all starts) know that I'm here, but I'm trying to lay low. And if you expose me, King Saul (and we know how cruel he can be) may go after me." So she's nervous to be exposed as a medium.

Let's pause here and ask the question which, of course commentaries should be asking: are mediums real? Are spiritists real? I think the very question would have surprised the reader. Of course they are, that's why we have such a firm list of verses in the Old Testament that say, "Do not go to them." Leviticus 19:37, Leviticus 20:6... But let me go to Deuteronomy 18:10.

10 There shall not be found among you *anyone* who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, *or one* who practices witchcraft, *or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,* ¹¹ *or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.*

Now it would be very easy at this moment for the Bible to say, "The reason you don't do this is because it's a waste of time. They're not real. These spiritists are fakes like Whoopi Goldberg." But here's what the text says. Verse 12:

¹² For all who do these things *are* an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. ¹³ You shall be blameless [*tamim*] before the Lord your God.

Sometimes translated as "perfect," *tamim* is not a mathematical word; it's a word of fullness or completeness. So the first three times (or at least the first two times) that *tamim* is used in the Bible... Notice where they are. Genesis 6:9 (first time):

⁹ This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect [*tamim*] in his generations.

And then Genesis 17:1. The subject is Abraham.

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless [*tamim*]."

The word, I think, is as close as you can get to a New Testament concept of being saved or being righteous or being proper with God. So when we talk about how a person is saved in the Old Testament, I think it's as simple as (and I've mentioned this before in our previous times together)... It's as simple as, "which *elohim* do they worship?" Just look for that part of the story of their life. Which god/God do they worship? Whether it's Noah, Abraham, or now Saul, or David to come... whether this person is "blameless" or able to be considered righteous or proper in the mind of God. By the way, Jeremiah 8 would be then probably the best way in my estimation to define the plan of salvation in the Old Testament by its opposite. Listen to how it goes. This is in the days just preceding the 586 B.C. exile. Jeremiah 8:1:

"At that time," says the Lord, "they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of its princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves. ² They shall spread them before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven [RJ: and that's a picture commonly, the *tsava-ot* of heaven—the gods that God has placed over the kingdoms], which they have loved and which they have served and after which they have walked, which they have sought [RJ: there's that inquiring of a god idea] and which they have

worshiped. They shall not be gathered nor buried; they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth. ³ Then death shall be chosen rather than life...

10:00 So if you have an Old Testament model of what salvation is, that is life instead of death. It's pictured here in Jeremiah 8 in review for the family of Israel as to why God sent not only the people into exile, but why God would consider a person—an individual—righteous or not, based again on which god/God they sought, worshiped, and loved.

So back to our text. We ended in verse 9, where the spiritist (the woman) is being asked to conjure up someone, and she's kinda nervous because she does not want to be caught by Saul. Verse 10:

¹⁰ And Saul swore to her by the Lord...

Interesting. Again, watch where Saul and Yahweh get along here.

¹⁰ And Saul swore to her by the Lord [Yahweh], saying, "As the Lord [Yahweh] lives..."

That phrase, "as Yahweh lives" or "as the LORD lives" appears 32 times that I counted it in the Old Testament as a phrase. It's spoken by many different people. David does it. Saul does it. And when Saul does it... Go back to 1 Samuel 19:6... Look out, because Saul is a consummate politician again.

⁶ So Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan, and Saul swore, "As the Lord lives, he [David] shall not be killed."

He's a liar. The idea that he would take Yahweh's name and say, "As God lives, I will not... blah, blah, blah..." Don't trust Saul at all. And of course, oath taking in Yahweh's name... Be very, very careful. I don't think that's the third commandment in its specific meaning, but it's the idea in the Old Testament that when you start using the name of a deity for how you're going to act, that's one thing. But if you're not a Yahwist, "Look out below," I would say. But let's listen to Saul.

¹⁰ And Saul swore to her by the Lord, saying, "As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing."

¹¹ Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?"

Interesting question. Now, if you could bring up anybody, who would you want to talk to? It's interesting that he says, "Bring up Samuel for me." The reason he does this is because back in 3:19, it says (and I think this is a summary statement for most of Samuel's life) that Samuel's words never "fell to the ground." Meaning, if there's anybody who could have a more accurate read on the mind of Yahweh, you couldn't find him. Samuel was the guy. So my point is that even Saul (a non-Yahwist) knew who to go to if he wanted to know the mind of Yahweh. And of course, we're going to find out what he's asking for is whether he should go to war against the Philistines. It was a common thing that you would go to the patron deity to find out if you should go to war or not, as any leader would of any nation. And here, of course, Saul is doing it with Yahweh. He's trying to, anyway.

Verse 12:

¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice.

I call this "the Exodus 8:19 moment." It's kind of like when Whoopi Goldberg gets freaked out by the appearance of the ghost. In Exodus 8:19, that's Pharaoh's magicians when they say this is the "digit of *elohim*" behind one of Moses' miracles, apparently meaning, "This is beyond the human realm." They were reporting to Pharaoh, "You're dealing with a guy here who's not just a human and his movements."

He's dealing with a very powerful *elohim*. That's when this woman shrieks out, right? We would have to ask, "What was she expecting?" Why is she screaming, and thus, "What was she expecting?" would be the background question. Two quick answers come to mind. One would be (and this is common among the commentators) that she was expecting nothing. She was a fraud and she was going to control the situation and it quickly got out of control. Or (and this is where I would fall), she was hoping to somehow contact the other world, but she had an experience that was more real than she expected it would be.

I forget if I've told you this story, Trey, but when I was doing my dissertation on the gods in the New Testament (the principalities and powers of Paul)... Stop me if I've told this story before. But I would work late into the night in my office at the Christian college I was teaching at, and it would come to about 1:00 in the morning and a janitor would come and knock on my door; it was time to go home. I guess it was just a policy to empty out the building at a certain point. And I was in the process of finishing this dissertation up and I would be up late almost every night. So usually he'd come by and say, "Hey, how you doing?" "Good." "All right, better get out." And I'd wrap up my stuff and I'd whistle down the hallway on the way out to my car. It was totally dark. It was a very ominous kind of building at night, very high ceilings. There was a reputation on campus that one of these buildings (in fact, the one I was in) was haunted and all this. And I remember

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thinking and saying, even, to the Lord... My dissertation was on the gods (or angels if people wanted to ask a popular way of saying it). So I would even be saying to God, "Wouldn't it be neat to meet an angel?" That would really help my chapter discussion on whatever I was doing. And I just remember the feeling, especially talking with Mike about it because we were both in our dissertation stages at this point. And we agreed that the question or the consideration (that it would be nice to see an angel) is very ill-informed. Because the point of the Bible is, if you saw one, you'd be freaked out. In other words, the answer coming back to me from God would be, "You don't want to. Trust me."

And so I think what happens here (and this would be evidence for what I'm saying) is that when the woman saw what God gave her (and that is either a vision of or a real moment of seeing *elohim*), she freaks out and she screams.

12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman spoke to Saul, saying, "Why have you deceived me? For you *are* Saul!"

So she must have understood through this moment that Saul was who he was. Verse 13:

13 And the king said to her, "Do not be afraid. What did you see?"

Apparently, he doesn't see anything. He can hear things but he can't see it.

And the woman said to Saul, "I saw an [*elohim*]..."

Now in our Bibles... Take a look at your own version. My New King James has, "I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth," but I have a footnote: "Hebrew is *elohim*." So literally she says, "Here's what I saw, Saul. I saw *elohim* coming up." Now the modifying participle there for "coming up" is plural so we know... Only the Septuagint gets this right, by the way, and the old King James. What she says is, "I saw (plural) *elohim* coming up—gods." "I saw gods coming up." The fact that our translations differ (take a look at what you have) is due to or reveals that translators are very uncomfortable still in our modern world with the concept of plural deities. "God" is used in the singular (small "g") in the RSV, NLT, and ESV. The word "spirit" is there in the TEV, NKJ, NIV, CEV. The Holman Christian has "spirit form," whatever that is. "Divine being" is what's in the NET, NRSV, the NASB, and the Jerusalem Publication Society (the Jewish Bible). But like I say, in the Septuagint (the Greek rendering of the Old Testament), they have *the-os*—gods (plural). And the old King James has "gods" (plural). "I saw gods coming up." It's just funny to me. Mike and I talked a lot about this. Is it conspiratorial that our modern versions seem to avoid the word "god" and put in words like "spirit" or "divine being" or just completely fool us and put in "angel" or something like

that for a lot of these translations?

Again, I think I told you this story. This was back in 2004, I think it was (early 2000's) when the NIV was being redone into *Today's NIV* (it's called). In 2005, Zondervan came out with *Today's NIV*. And back in the year before that, I remember at ETS they asked... Members of ETS could go to the general editor of it as they were finishing up their translations and you could make recommendations for how you wanted a reading in the new NIV to sound. There are like 13 translators and 40 reviewers, but you could make recommendations before they came out with the finalized versions. Like, instead of "with child" say "pregnant" and things like that. And that's good. I'm always in favor of retranslations periodically. And you'd go into this hotel suite (I did) and you'd give the editor... He sat behind a desk and I handed him a list of (I remember very well) 21 places where I believe the word "gods" (small "g") should appear in the text in the new NIV because of the Hebrew word *elohim* behind it, just like this one. This would have been one of those examples. I remember waiting anxiously and a year and a half or two years go by. And I take a look at the new NIV when it came out and not one of my recommendations were followed. I had to smile. But it's just funny how we're improving our Bibles all the time, but when it comes to putting the word "gods" (with a small "g"), we're still very nervous to do it.

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By the way, the parallel account of this story where a person observes a freakish moment and tells an audience what they saw is Daniel 3.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?"

25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God [a son of the gods]."

Meaning, he is not human. Whatever this is, it ain't human. *Bar elahin* is "son of God" in Aramaic and is equivalent to *bene elohim*. I just think it means it ain't human. And so what the woman saw was something that she had no vocabulary for except to say, "I saw nonhumans." They were spirits of some kind.

I took the time with that just to remind myself that when you're reading the Bible with the Divine Council Worldview, you're going to have to take information into the story because almost always the translation will let us down.

Verse 14. And I think Saul at this point knows that he's dealing with an actual story now that he has been given by God (be it for good or ill for his sake) truth.

And he is curious now what she saw.

¹⁴ So he said to her, “What is his form?”

Again, he can't see it.

And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he *is* covered with a mantle.” And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground and bowed down.

Again, in the Old Testament (and even in the New), it's not uncommon for a person to bow in the presence of an *elohim*, even if it's not Yahweh. That bowing is not signaling breaking the first commandment, it just means that whenever you meet a divine being, of course the first thing you do is get down. And that's what he's going to do here. It doesn't mean that his understanding of Samuel is that he is an equivalent of Yahweh, it just means you get down and prostrate yourself.

By the way, is this actually Samuel? I think whatever you do, you're going to have trouble. Because if it's the actual Samuel, there are going to be some problems in the story with what he says. Is it a vision of Samuel? I think that's possible. Whatever we do, think of it this way: God is attempting to say something very serious to Saul and he's using an accommodation to do so. So whatever is going on, this is Yahweh working behind the curtain. And I'm open to options from there as to what this woman Saul. It's kind of like the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. I don't think Jesus is trying to teach the reality of being able to yell across the chasm back and forth how they did. The story is meant to say that earthly choices are permanent in the next world. Short of that, we have a lot of parts of that parable (for example) that I just don't think you can make walk on all fours. And maybe this story is made to be the same way. The point is that God was trying to get some truth through to Saul and he's going to do it through this apparent vision of Samuel.

Verse 15:

¹⁵ Now Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?”

So you notice... I won't take time for it, but if you go to Job 14:7-12, Psalm 115:17, and Ecclesiastes 6:6... Let me give you one example. I'll do the Psalms one for you. What God is doing (or the speaker if it's Samuel) is he's accommodating the ancients' view of where dead people are. Psalm 115:17:

**17 The dead do not praise the Lord,
Nor any who go down into silence.**

Of course, the Old Testament is replete with the idea that dead people go down to the pit (Sheol) and that that's where they abide in silence or in dusty, musty quietude. It's not hell. It's also not fun; it's boring. So that's the idea of death in the Old Testament. So if you have the real Samuel talking here, at least you have to say he's keeping with the accommodation model that when the ancients thought of death, they thought of going down into a pit. What we can't say is that Samuel is in heaven because of verse 19 (coming up), and you'll see that in a moment.

But anyway, verse 16. Did I finish 15? No I didn't.

15 Now Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?"

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And Saul answered, "I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do."

16 Then Samuel said: "So why do you ask me, seeing the Lord has departed from you and has become your enemy?"

Again, that's never said of a Yahwist; it's always said of a non-covenant person.

17 And the Lord has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David [RJ: we've already heard that story].¹⁸ Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord...

Again, there's that idea of what it means to worship the right God. You simply obey the voice of Yahweh. Lest we say, as sometimes the Reformed tradition gets into, "Well, no one can obey perfectly." "Isn't that the curse of the Law that you have to be perfect?" No. The Old Testament is clear that you can obey... Listen to what we hear about David later in 1 Kings 14:8. God is talking about David and he says,

⁸ and tore the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it to you; and yet you have not been as My servant David, who kept My commandments

and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only *what was* right in My eyes;

Also in 1 Kings 15:5:

⁵ because David did *what was* right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

So yes, he's got blemishes on his record. But when it comes to obeying the voice of the Lord... It's kind of like our wedding vows today. When we hear a man promise the moon to his bride at their wedding, we don't walk away saying, "Oh yeah, right, he's going to do that." No, we honor that. If fifty years later they celebrate their anniversary, we talk about their faithfulness to each other. Not that they were perfect, but the idea of faithfulness is a possibility in the story of scripture. And David does it, and the point is that we do it, too. And so when we hear in 17 and 18 that God is taking the kingdom from Saul and giving it to someone else because of obedience issues, that's it. We're simply talking about which *elohim* you obey. Verse 19:

¹⁹ Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines.

Here's the promise that Samuel is telling Saul.

And tomorrow you and your sons *will be* with me.

Well, that's not "with me" in heaven, of course. That's "with me" in death. So the point being, like in 2 Samuel 12 when David is crying over the death of Bathsheba's and his child (remember that?), he says, "I cannot go to him, but he will..." [laughs] I probably should read it, since I can't quote it. This is 2 Samuel 12:23.

²³ But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

I take that to mean, "I shall go to him in death; he will not return to me in life." That's what he's saying there. We're not talking about babies being in heaven.

Let's finish it up then in 1 Samuel. In fact, I'll just summarize verses 20 to 25.

²⁰ Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, and was dreadfully afraid...

He finally gets up from the ground. It's interesting in verse 24:

24 Now the woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she hastened to kill it. And she took flour and kneaded *it*, and baked unleavened bread from it.

The point is, he spent all night there and they even had a meal that took awhile to prepare.

25 So she brought *it* before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they rose and went away that night.

And that ends our reading. So he will die, of course, in chapter 31 (Saul will) to fulfill this prophecy. Remember, this whole story is being bracketed, though, by 1 Chronicles 10:13—that God killed Saul because of his unfaithfulness. And the Endor Witch story is brought up in 1 Chronicles 10:13-14 as *the* reason that God kills Saul. So this is a very important moment in the biblical story.

Well, let me just make some points in conclusion, bringing a Divine Council Worldview. This is a good story that illustrates the fact that bringing a Divine Council Worldview into the text is the only way to appreciate the text. That is, what you bring in is what you're going to get out. And here are some things that we caught.

1. Are the gods real? Yes.
2. Are mediums and spiritists real? Well, they can be. And that's why the story works as it does.
3. Is God's jealousy for our worship real? Absolutely! And this is, again, why I think we could argue so carefully for the reality of gods. And that is that when God hears us praying to another deity, he's not sad, he's angry. He's not listening to this conversation we're having with Mickey Mouse, he's actually hearing us talk to other real beings. And that makes him angry.
4. Worship is behind almost every story of the Bible. It's certainly behind every story dealing with salvation. So as I've said before, let's not put the privilege (that is, forgiveness of sins) ahead of the means of entrance into salvation. The only way to be saved in the Bible is to worship the right God. And when we do, we're forgiven of our sins. But we cannot tell someone who is not worshipping Yahweh to ask forgiveness. That's getting the cart before the horse.
5. Lastly, as I've said, this whole story is about Saul being replaced by David, not because David will be a behaviorally better person. I think you could

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list the moral mistakes of David and Saul and notice that David probably beats Saul when it comes to how bad he can be morally. We know more about him, frankly. So sins are not less on his ledger than Saul's, for sure. But the reason that this is important is because David...

Let me finish with this: David alone is able to say Psalm 24, starting in verse 3. A psalm of David.

³ Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord?

Or who may stand in His holy place?

⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart,

Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,

Nor sworn deceitfully.

⁵ He shall receive blessing from the Lord,

And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

A person in the Old Testament could be righteous simply because they have not lifted their heart up to an idol. And that's what David will be. He will be a man according to (or after) God's heart. So that's the story, of course, of 2 Samuel.

Thank you, Trey! That was fun. I appreciate the opportunity to work through 1 Samuel 28.

TS: Yeah, and we appreciate you. It's interesting in the ESV (which is the translation that I tend to read), it has "a god" in 1 Samuel 28:13. Singular form. It got the "god" right, but it only says one god, so that's interesting.

RJ: Yeah, yeah. Again, they could have just looked at the Septuagint, but for some reason they look at it and turn away.

TS: It's funny, I was talking to my mom the other day about how hard it is to read the Bible. For me, that's what makes it interesting. But for her, it's a deterrent—when you get into all these translations and whatnot. But reading the Bible is difficult! And if you really want to study it...

RJ: It's like any hobby. I've long maintained (and Mike and I used to talk about this all the time) that it's like any hobby—model train-ing, quilting, whatever. It's as simple as you want it to be and as hard as you want it to be. If you want it to be the most complex thing in the world, I'm sure model train-ing (I've never done it) could qualify as one of the most difficult things in the world to do if you simply want to put the time and effort into it. When it comes to Bible reading, I'm sure God does not want to hear that it's hard. That would make him feel bad because

it's as C.S. Lewis said, "the washer woman who has never learned to wash behind her ears can get it just fine," and yet the most intense scholar still has his work cut out for him because there's just so much there.

TS: Yeah, that's what makes it the greatest book—the fact that you can go deep down the rabbit holes and the nuances and everything. So somebody like us that enjoys it finds it interesting. It's crazy how it can be simple and complex at the same time.

RJ: Yeah, and I love, again, how Lewis put it. He says it in such beautiful ways. It's one of those parts of life that you cannot talk about it unless you go down the path a certain distance. So those who have gone down the path (as you and I have) to whatever distance we do... You're rewarded for that distance, plus you got more reward in front of you at every moment. That is what's so fascinating about Bible study—that you have tomorrow yet! You still have more to learn. I have never liked the term "scholar" when it comes to Bible stuff. I know "you're the layman, he's the scholar." And so let me just pick on that just because we can. To call anyone a Bible scholar to me is a bit of a misnomer because whoever you say that about is going to say, "Well, eeehhh..." [laughs] How do you become a scholar in the hardest... in any kind of divine revelation? How does a human ever get to the point of being able to consider themselves a scholar? I think it's very hard. So maybe it's one of those words we have to tread lightly on, you know?

35:00

TS: Yeah. I enjoyed your story about Mike and the angels and stuff. I always preface it with "don't scare me" at the end of it, actually, when I want to see an angel, like you said. It would be nice if I could have a conversation or get a message. Just don't scare me when you deliver it.

But real quickly, do you have any other (I know I'm putting you on the spot) Mike story that comes to your mind for us? I love those stories when you talk about Mike.

RJ: Yeah! They always come after I'm done. But I was thinking about this when I was talking. One time Mike and I were talking. I had just been invited by a realtor who knew me (a Christian realtor), and he had been asked this a couple times before he talked to me about one particular time where the person buying the house asked him (the realtor) to find a preacher to come in and de-exorcise or exorcise demons out of the house. I guess it's some denominational practices or at least theological traditions by some Christians that when they go into a house... Like Catholics will bury a statue of Joseph upside-down in front of the house in order to sell it better. You've heard of that?

TS: Yeah.

RJ: The story, anyway, was by this realtor. He called me and he knew me well. And he said, "Hey, I've been asked to find someone who could come and pray over a house and get rid of the demons." Because pictures had fallen off the walls and stuff like that. Of course, I was talking to Mike at the time. I forget about what. But I remember the first thing he said. Again, what I loved about Mike was how far down this rabbit hole he had thought. And his reaction time for these kinds of statements was so quick on the fly, you know. And he said, "Well, pray for the person, not the house." I thought that was wise. So we walked in and the person was there with the realtor. And I prayed. And if you had listened to me (now that you knew what to listen for), you would have said, "Well, Ronn didn't pray that a demon would leave the house." Because I didn't know whether there was a demon in the house. And whether I prayed or not, how would I affect the presence of a demon in the house? What I prayed for was the person buying the house and the relationship (and here's where, since they asked for me [laughs] they were going to get my opinion, right?)... I prayed that that person would come to believe and trust and love Yahweh. I mean, I didn't say it maybe in those words, but that was one of those stories where... And right around that time, too... This was at Northwestern College, where I was teaching at the time. I had some students come up to me and say, "Hey, there's a haunted house in town that we all know about and sometimes we go down there at night." It was some kind of place or house or mansion that had a reputation, and they came up after class and said, "Would you want to go down and see it?" Did I want to go down with them next week when they did something? And again, I told Mike about this, and I had already given my answer to the students. And when I told Mike, he had the same answer. Can you guess what it was? And he was glad I said it: "Absolutely not."

TS: Yeah.

RJ: "I'm not going." To me, being part of that story of writing the dissertation and praying that I could see an angel and God basically saying (I felt), "No, you're not going to get one because I'm being gracious to you." That Mike had the same opinion—that you don't go looking for trouble... This is Jeremiah 8. You just don't go. And you be wise concerning good and simple concerning evil, in Paul's estimation. And one of those ways would be if you hear about something demonic, the reason you stay away is because it's very, very real. I was glad that I said what I did. And when I heard Mike's immediate response, it only confirmed it.

TS: Yeah, that's great. I think that as I've gotten older... You know, when you're young, that supernatural stuff fascinates you, whether it be movies or whatever, maybe a haunted house. But as I've gotten older, I've gotten wiser. It's like, "No, I want nothing to do with that." Because you do, you're right... If you go looking for trouble, you're going to find it.

RJ: Oh, and one other... I was just thinking about this now, too. Fern and... What's the other name?

TS: Audrey.

40:00

RJ: Audrey and Fern. You know, when Mike first met them... I didn't know anything about it, of course. He was very gracious in keeping identities secret. We met... How did this go? For some reason, I was sitting with him in a rental car in a parking ramp at 2 in the morning. It feels like an episode out of *X-Files*, you know? But I'm sitting there with him and he had picked me up... That's what it was! He had picked me up from the airport and we were going to room together at ETS. And he pulled in, turned the car off, and I just remember it being totally dark. And he started telling me about this couple that he had met and talked to and how they had gone through some things and he had befriended them. And [laughs]... The reason I bring it up... I didn't know anything about this, but I was desperately hungry. I hadn't eaten supper and it was like 2 in the morning. And I just remember thinking to myself, "Mike, why are you so interested in this couple that from everything I know going in, who are they?" But he went ON and ON and ON as he just stared out the front window of his car in the pitch black, just talking. What was so cool about Mike is he didn't romanticize it. It was purely factual to him. "Here are two people who have had experiences that only confirm what I have been thinking about and talking about and studying. This is biblical stuff we're talking about." And here I am thinking about a hamburger [laughs]. I was fascinated. By the time he was done, I was glad I heard it, but I remember getting out and thinking, "I'm starving!" But that's Mike. When it got on his mind, he was willing to sit and talk and talk and talk.

TS: Well, hey, Ronn, you're just going to have to take time and collect some of your Mike stories and come back, and we're going to have to do an entire episode of you reminiscing about you and Mike. I think people would love that.

RJ: One of them would be... I'll tell you this without telling you the whole, but it's about when he got turned down for a job teaching where I was teaching. He interviewed, he taught the course that day, and we had the chairman of the Bible department in there. We walk out back to my house and get the word that he didn't get the job. And I just remember... I'll have to tell you that story, because it was a classic case of a godly man who was willing to go wherever God led him, but he couldn't understand why in the world... Why could he talk about the truth and some people just not see it?

TS: Oh, I know.

RJ: It's an interesting story.

TS: That's awesome. Well, save that one. I'm serious. I want to have you back, Ronn, in the future. You can just have the floor and tell some Mike stories if you'd like.

RJ: Sure.

TS: That'd be great. Well, we appreciate it. Hey, thank you so much for coming on and helping us cover 1 Samuel. I know Mike would appreciate it. And I love the stories. I just really thank, thank, thank you again for that. And I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.