

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

Number 85

“Q&A 9”

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With

**Residential Layman
Trey Stricklin**

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Q&A 8

Our 9th Question and Answer episode! Also find out what topics are next for the podcast.

Harvey book on term Jew:

Graham Harvey, The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew, and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature (Brill, 2001)

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 85, Q&A 9. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing?

MSH: Very good, very good, the ninth Q&A. I can hardly believe it.

TS: I know. It's crazy. We're coming up on one, if we're not already there. I think February so we're not too far away from our one year anniversary. Maybe we should get a cake or do something.

MSH: yeah, we should look that up.

TS: Maybe we should save it for our 100th episode. I kind of view it like you ended on the 33rd episode, kind of like Jesus, and then we resurrected it on the 34th.

MSH: All at Masonic esoteric symbolism there. Here's another Masonic symbol for you. I like chocolate cake with chocolate icing.

TS: Duly noted.

MSH: So look out for all that chocolate cake.

TS: We are 15 episodes away from 100 so maybe we should brainstorm on what we could do that's special.

MSH: Or we could throw that to the audience. Maybe somebody will come up with something pretty cool.

TS: We'll find out. Mike, we've got several questions so let's just get to it I guess if you want. The first one is from Seth and he's got three questions, and he's in Kalamazoo, Michigan. So his first question is, could it be a part of God's original intent to dwell on the earth in the form of man as ruler over all creation? When we see God commanding Adam and Eve to spread the rule of the Garden of Eden over the earth, does that have the culmination of God ruling visibly on the earth as we see in Revelation 21-22? And could Lucifer have known that and decided to usurp God's plan by separating them unto himself through their rebellion and thus gain dominance of this earth realm?

MSH: Well, the first part of that sort of answers itself because you do see in Revelation 21-22 God is physicalized. I guess you could put it that way, physically present, so it's sort of answer's itself. But I would say this. In biblical theology, God's presence with humanity naturally needs to be veiled or obscured or filtered in some way other than the occasions of an audible voice or a vision. That's the pattern in the Old Testament. Of course in the New Testament we get incarnation. But when God appears, he typically appears as something or often someone parsable to humans and I think also to protect humans from his unfiltered or unveiled presence. So for that reason I think for God interact with man in any sort of enduring relationship that you

have to have some sort of embodiment for that or, at least, that embodiment would be the best way to achieve that.

And we get the language of embodiment or anthropomorphism, to use the scholarly world or word, in Genesis chapter 3. We get this in the Eden story and for those who are wondering to what the reference there is, in Genesis 3:8, that's the reference where the Lord God was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. So that's very obviously anthropomorphic language and that phrasing actually gets picked up elsewhere in the Old Testament about the presence of God being present among his people and whatnot. So I think from the very beginning, the very get go in Eden, we have God in visible embodied form and the fact that sort of the way that God has to do things or the way that it makes his presence most easily parsable and the way that allows for a relationship to happen with humans in the most cohesive way, to me that idea makes sense.

So I would say that there is some sense to that approach and I think that approach we get glimpses of it in what we already have back in Genesis with Eden and then later on. The question about Lucifer, something about did Lucifer know all this either intention or plan for embodiment, and having that knowledge, did he decide to usurp God's plan by separating people to himself and then rebelling and so on so forth. I don't see any necessary connection between God's embodiment and God's choice to be present with man that way and the rebellion of the *nacash*, this cherub throne guardian figure, this divine figure who rebels. The *nacash's* motive would've been the same regardless of whether God planned to use embodiment in human form or something else.

I don't see a necessary connection between the two ideas. Certainly, the motive of the *nacash* was elimination of rivals as opposed to merely gaining dominance of the earth. In other words, I don't think he would've been satisfied if he had just been appointed over them. I think it's clear that he wants them to sin assuming that God will judge sin and eliminate them. I read the phrase to desire to be above the stars of El, the stars of God in Isaiah 14 as rebellion and resistance to God's will to have the humans be part of the family and participate in the divine governance of the creation. But I don't see a necessary connection between God's choice of how he would be present and what the *nacash* decides to do. I think he would've decided to do the same thing anyway regardless of how God was present in the relationship.

TS: The second question is concerning the body of Christ in terms of mission, bringing the light of the Gospel to people groups and regions, is there still an overthrowing of the principalities going on? It seems there is a back-and-forth struggle in this country in many other areas even while the Gospel expands. What is the relation to the church and the powers and principalities today as you see it?

MSH: Well, there was a back-and-forth struggle in the book of Acts in the days of the Apostles. There were lots of persecution so I don't really see the circumstances as any different. As the body of Christ, Kingdom of God expands, the kingdom of darkness shrinks and there is an ebb and flow. There is a back-and-forth but I think there's also both biblically and, I think, historically, there is also an inexorable gradual increase of one, the kingdom of God, versus the other. We tend to look at our own circumstances. We tend to look at tragedies or terrorism or whatever it is and so that thought in the isolation that it is in tends to color our perception. But I think that's a mistake.

I think the perception, at least the wording of the question, is for my taste a little too focused on this country. But of course that's the country you live in. That's the perspective you're going to have so it's hard not to do that. In other words, I think it's a little too focused on the church that we sort of see or that we're aware of. But the church, the kingdom of God, has been expanding for decades. If you go all the way back to the apostolic era, it's for millennia. But let's just take our own day and age. The church's been expanding for decades elsewhere outside of America, Asia, the church is just exploding both in terms of, well, let's just take China. There's the visible church and you can't be cynical and say no one who's in an official church is really a Christian.

That's an overstatement. Talk to some missionaries in China and you'll realize that isn't true. But the underground church has grown exponentially. And it has in many of these dark places, whether it was Eastern Europe under the Soviet regime, the Middle East even. You see churches popping up with, frankly, Acts-like in a miraculous sorts of things happening to kick-start it and propel it. Africa is another case. Outside of the US where it's easy to sort of view that the church here as stagnant, doing lots of other things except for evangelism. It's very easy to look at the situation and sort of think that way. I think even that is a little too jaded. But outside beyond the shores of America, there are places globally where the church is increasing dramatically and is still under persecution. I don't see the situation as being much different than it was in the days of the Apostles.

TS: Seth's final question is, is it right to think that one reason God was so strict with Israel concerning involvement with other nations, marriage, customs, etc., and even seemingly being harsh towards them, is because he actually had an eye toward the redemption through Israel and ultimately Jesus. In other words, wanting to preserve Israel by setting them apart unto him and order through them to bring deliverance to all?

MSH: I think the survival of Israel is really crucial to the progress of salvation history. In broad strokes I think yeah, obviously God has an interest in preserving Israel because they are a key element to what his plan is. The Old Testament casts Israel's distinctiveness as being linked to its survival because its distinctiveness is fundamentally linked to the notion of loyalty to Yahweh. So, when I say loyalty to Yahweh, you can say that negatively as well, not aligning yourself with other gods. So in biblical times, identity as a people and loyalty to Yahweh, they were tied together and also tied to the land as we talked about last time with Leviticus 26 and earlier episodes.

You should also think of the Deuteronomy 32 worldview. All the other nations are put under the lesser elohim, the sons of God, and Israel is Yahweh's portion. So the survival of Israel is something that God is intimately interested in and God wants and will preserve because that will propel salvation history and be the key to bringing these other nations back into a relationship with him. In biblical times, all that's wrapped up with a specific piece of land and family relationships, not intermarrying and population and what's the extended family versus the inner family, all these different laws. There's a rationale for insuring the survival of the people but also ensuring their survival in the sense that these rules cut them off or ostensibly aimed at cutting them off from worshipping other gods, from being seduced into a disloyal relationship to Yahweh.

The worship of other gods is viewed in landed conquest terms. To worship another deity in Israel is in effect to surrender not only your loyalty to a different god, to that particular god but also to surrender your land because that god is now going to be viewed now as dominant in that space, in that turf. So therefore, the identity of the people of Yahweh are linked to loyalty to Yahweh which is linked to the land. All these things, all these ideas are interconnected because of the covenant relationship. The covenant relationship involves, just look at what the covenant involves, the growth in population, I'll make you as the stars in the sky in numeric terms there.

For the sake of our discussion, its link to growth of the population, I'll give you a land, it's linked to land and I'll be your God and you'll be my people. It's linked to loyalty so all these things are interconnected. And since God looks at that and tells us in the covenant language it's going to be through you that all the other nations are going to be blessed and brought back. Israel needs to survive and these laws are a means to helping that situation happen.

TS: Our next one from Tom. In Hebrews 10, the author talks about how futile the sacrificial system is when it comes to accomplishing atonement. When bringing this up to a person who holds to the temple being rebuilt and the sacrifices starting again, they mentioned that even Paul made sacrifices to defend this position in Acts 21.

MSH: Yeah, that's very poor logic on the part of those who would do that for a number of reasons. I'll get to those but let's talk about the sacrifice, the "offering" that Paul brings in Acts 21. The question itself, and I'm not saying the questionnaire, but this question, bringing Acts into this picture then talking about renewing sacrifices in a new temple, the question itself sort of presupposes that Old Testament sacrifices have something to do with forgiveness in a moral sense. The series on Leviticus I think made the point many times that in the overwhelming number of cases that isn't in view at all. Sacrifices were about making someone fit for sacred space or taking care of ritual uncleanness, taking away the possibility of polluting sacred space so that God wouldn't be offended or "driven away" or God wouldn't withdraw.

So it's not about I did something wrong and I feel bad so I'm going to bring this animal and kill it so that God will feel differently toward me and forgive me. The sacrifices are really about okay, you messed up here and because you messed up, you're going to pollute sacred space. You're going to pollute the people around you and then they're going to pollute sacred space. We can't have this. We have to have the presence of God. God is here to dwell with us. We need to have the place that is God's domain be utterly different and kept utterly different because there's a difference between him and you. This is the system that he has set up. If you want him to be with you, this is what we have to do.

So it was about sacred space. It wasn't about the individual bringing an offering in that sense. But the question kind of I think distorts that. Now when we went through Acts on the podcast, we noted that there were a number of possible interpretations of what Paul did. The most common one is probably the Nazarite vow. If listeners recall, I went to Darrell Bock's commentary, and I'll read a little bit of that here again when he comments on the Nazarite view, which is just one of several views. I'm going to really focus here on two items instead of three or four.

"The purification for Paul is to restore purity after he has traveled in Gentile areas. [**MSH: We're far afield from this moral salvation kind**

of thing that we associate with the work on the cross. Jesus didn't die so that you can be clean because you went into a Gentile area. It is just quite different.] Purification that Paul offers as is most likely for this reason.”

MSH: Now sometimes that might've been associated with the Nazarite vow but, typically, Nazarite vows were not associated with that. What I'm going to do here's talk about the Nazarite option and then this idea of restoration of purity, that they could be related but we're going to consider them differently. So if it's the Nazarite vow, then the Nazarite vows typically lasted for 30 days at least according to rabbinic literature of the time of the New Testament era. In this Nazarite view, payment for sacrifices that Paul does in Acts 21:26 and shaving the head would be part of the observance of the law about the Nazarites, which we get the book of Numbers 6:2-21, most of the chapter there. Now it could refer to restoring purity generally but they could be separate things as I mentioned. Let me just read Numbers 6:9-11.

⁹“And if any man dies very suddenly beside him and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it. ¹⁰On the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two pigeons to the priest to the entrance of the tent of meeting, ¹¹and the priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned by reason of the dead body. And he shall consecrate his head that same day

MSH: Now that's part of the Nazarite vow. You'll notice that the “sin” is not moral. It's touching a dead body, and we've already talked in our series of Leviticus about how the “sin” offering actually refers to a purification offering or as people like my phrase decontamination offering. That's what it was. It was not about moral forgiveness in the way we think about Jesus on the cross. So I think the original question sort of distorts that or it doesn't recognize that distinction. The burnt offering had nothing to do with moral guilt, moral culpability. The burnt offering was what you would give to go visit the Lord, the whole burnt offering idea.

So the Nazarite vow, if that is indeed what Paul is doing here in Acts 21, has nothing to do with the kind of moral atonement and moral forgiveness that the New Testament associates with what Jesus did on the cross. It's about decontamination and becoming clean from becoming infected ritually by touching a dead body. Now, it's actually not clear that the Nazarite vow is in view with what Paul is doing. People go there mentally because of the shaving of the head. It makes them think of the Nazarite vow. But three chapters prior to Acts 21, where we see Paul going in the temple and doing this vow, in Acts 18:18, there is this comment about Paul having spent a lot of time in Gentile territory. Acts 18:18 says,

¹⁸ After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchræe he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow.

MSH: So you have a couple of issues here. This is sort of a making a point that Paul had been among Gentiles in Gentile territory for a while and he actually has the hair cut before he ever gets to Jerusalem. So you have to wonder, wasn't the cutting of the hair like at the end of the

Nazarite vow? So you could read that and say well, the fact that Paul cuts his hair earlier and when you get to Acts 21, he isn't the one cutting his hair. It's the other guys who are said to cut their hair.

You could say well, maybe this is not a Nazarite vow. Now having said that, Josephus at least in one place does point out that the way Jews practiced the Nazarite vow during that time was that some of them did cut the hair before offering the sacrifice, before the final phase of bringing the "sin" offering or the "burnt" offering. So it's possible even though Paul cut his hair three chapters earlier. That doesn't really disqualify what he's doing from being a Nazarite vow but it isn't really clear. There's just ambiguity there. Now I think the alternative is sort of to divorce this from the Numbers 6 passage, Nazarite situation.

Head shaving was also associated with taking more personal vows, in other words, something between you and the Lord. It could even be for thanksgiving. It doesn't have to be necessarily for any kind of moral violation. So the offerings of Acts 21:26 may have nothing to do with Numbers 6 and the Nazarite vow. We just don't know. Bock as I read a few minutes ago favors the general restoration to purity because Paul had been in Gentile territory. To me, that does make a lot of sense. He doesn't want to go into the temple. If he does go into the temple, he has to do it under these circumstances because of the Gentile contact. Let me just pull out one statement here from Josephus or about Josephus.

“Gentiles were not allowed [**MSH: according to Josephus in antiquities; this is. 15:11-5.**] Gentiles were not allowed into the main temple area and they could be put to death if they were caught there. They actually have [**MSH: this is Bock now Bock says that**] 4.5 foot tall stone markers inscribed in Greek and Latin in the outer court that surrounded the court of women announced of foreigners that they were prohibited from entering the sanctuary. Two of those notices have actually been found and they read: ‘No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple and the enclosure. Anyone who is caught trespassing will bear personal responsibility for his ensuing death.’ “

MSH: So it is a serious thing to bring Gentiles in. You say, why do we mention that, because if you go to the Acts 21 incident, Paul gets accused of doing that. He actually hadn't done it but Paul gets accused of doing that. They accuse him of teaching against the people, against the law, against the temple. They say he brought Greeks into the temple. They apparently suppose that he brought Trophimus of Ephesus into the temple area because that's one of the guys he's traveling with, a Gentile. It's in Acts 21:4. So this whole thing about bringing a Gentile into the temple but they also add this accusation, that he has defiled the temple. That charge, this is Bock and I think this makes sense, that charge may have extended from Paul's stay in Gentile territory according to Acts 18.

That's a very long and convoluted way of saying look, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter if it's a Nazarite vow or some other vow that concerned ritual purity. Both the Nazarite vow and those other vows were not about moral transgressions. They were about incurring impurity on your person. And if you go back to the Old Testament impurity laws, that's why you got a purification offering. I'm sorry it's translated sin offering. It makes it sound like a moral violation. That is not the point. And if it's a Nazarite you had to have a burnt offering in there to

approach God and have him accept you. But it's not for moral violation. It specifically says in Numbers 9 it's because he touched a dead body or he had touched something else he wasn't supposed to touch.

It's about this ritual impurity kind of state. Now let's go from that to this larger question of bringing back the sacrifices. I'll admit up front this is a bit of this is a theological pet peeve with me because this makes no sense at all. If the sacrifices are brought back then the writer of Hebrews was wrong. He made an error because the writer of Hebrews has the work on the cross covering past, present, and future people, sinners, all of us. There is absolutely no coherent rationale for bringing back sacrifices post-Jesus. What would their purpose be? They can't be to atone for moral forgiveness because that would be covered by the cross unless the writer of Hebrews made a boo-boo. I would suggest if that's the case, then you, the person who's saying the sacrifices are coming back, I don't know what the basis of your salvation is then because if the writer of Hebrews is wrong, then maybe you aren't covered. Maybe your sins haven't been atoned for. Maybe you'll be lucky enough to live during the sacrificial era when it comes. These are absurdities.

Now what usually happens is people who defend this idea usually argue that renewed sacrifices are somehow a memorial of the cross, a reminder of what the cross meant or what had happened at the cross, what Jesus' death meant. We bring back animal sacrifices to somehow teach this object lesson to help instruct Jews or maybe other people about what happened on the cross. That is logically and theologically absurd for a couple simple straightforward reasons. If Jesus' sacrifice covered us, those of us who lived well after the cross event, why wouldn't it cover anyone else who lived after the cross event, including people who are living later in a millennium? It's usually the literal millennialist crowd that argues for a literal temple needing to be rebuilt and then you have to have sacrifices because what's the point of having a temple if you don't do sacrifices and all this kind of stuff? All those people who lived during the millennium and afterwards, guess what, they lived after the cross just like you are. Why are you covered and they're not?

It doesn't make any sense. Why would people need sacrifices as a reminder of the atonement of Jesus? I have a suggestion. Why not just hand them a New Testament and have them read about it? Why would anyone need sacrifices for understanding how Jesus fulfilled what needed to happen or fulfill the typology of Old Testament sacrifices when they could just read it like you and I did? And with respect to modern Jews, they haven't needed the Old Testament law or the cross commemorated to become believers in the Messiah since the cross. You just give them the Gospel. You hand them the New Testament. You speak the Gospel to them and they believe. They don't need a sacrificial system in place to comprehend the message of the Gospel. What about Jews in the New Testament era living after 70 A.D. when the temple was destroyed? Guess what, they can still understand the Gospel and still believe it and become followers of Jesus.

This idea that we need sacrifices either to atone for sin makes no sense. And it also doesn't make any sense if the purpose of the sacrifices to commemorate or memorialize the meaning of the cross. Just hand them a New Testament. That should tell them because that's how you and I learned and we were fully capable of embracing it, believing it or rejecting it. This is baggage that comes along with this insistence that a literal temple has to be rebuilt. I'll say something else here but I'm not going to rabbit trail with it. You don't need a literal rebuilt temple to have an earthly kingdom. You can still have an earthly kingdom without having a

literal temple. In fact, the book of Revelation specific says there is no temple. But setting that aside, you don't need to have Jesus coming back and ruling on the earth, you don't have to have a temple for that. You just don't. We tend to assume that but the purpose of the temple is obsolete. We don't need the sacrifices unless the writer of Hebrews is wrong and other passages, too. The New Testament is actually pretty clear about its use of temple language in association with Jesus' body, Spirit of the presence of God was in him, to say the least, and believers.

That's why Paul says we are the temple, you are the temple, collectively and individually. Why should we look for a literal temple when 1 Corinthians 3:6 and 19:20 have believers, individually and corporately, as the temple of God? None of this just doesn't make any sense, and here's the kicker. If you're a literalist reading of the book of Revelation, which most of this kind of millennialist is and wants to have a literal temple rebuilt, if you're literally reading Revelation 11, then guess where the temple is in Revelation 11? It's in heaven. That's what the text says. So the New Testament actually says the temple is in heaven but somehow yet, we need it back here on earth? I could go on for another half-hour just bringing up points of conundra, bringing up conundra for this view.

I know why it's out there. It's out there because of an overt literalizing of certain passages about the temple and then you sort of have to ignore the way the New Testament temple talk and you have to kind of a flinch about the writer of the book of Hebrews and all that stuff. But using the sacrifices, using what Paul does as a wedge to argue this is really poor thinking because no matter what Paul did, whether it was Nazarite or something else, it had nothing to do with the kind of forgiveness, the kind of atonement that resulted from the work on the cross as opposed to what you read in the Old Testament sacrifices. Those are largely just about purifying sacred space making you fit that you didn't pollute things that have been designated God's domain and God's turf.

TS: The next one's from Michael. Do you think that God, who knows all things both real and possible, and knows all the possible decisions that we could make in any given situation, chooses not to know the one decision out of all the possibilities that we will make?

MSH: Why does God need to decide to not know the decisions we will make? The question presumes that foreknowledge necessitates predestination. God has to un-know that when that actually happens because if he foreknew that when it happens, it had to be predestined. Foreknowledge does not necessitate predestination. Even the axiom that the question used, God knows all things real and possible, if that is true, the fact that God knows possibilities and all possibilities don't happen tells you that God's foreknowledge of those possibilities did not result in the predestination of all those possibilities. Foreknowledge and predestination are not inextricably linked.

Foreknowledge does not necessitate predestination. God knowing all things real and possible actually undermines that idea. So God's knowing what choice among all the possible options we will make doesn't require that choice is predestination. It might've been predestinated. God is free to do that if he wants to. My point is that it's not required. It's not necessitated so God doesn't need to un-know things that he foreknows. In my experience, Calvinists, who get into sort of these convoluted ideas, they simply assume and largely because that's just the way the system is taught. They simply assume that foreknowledge and predestination are inextricably linked. But you go to passages like 1 Samuel 23 where God

clearly foreknows two things that never happened. It is just not the case. Foreknowledge does not necessitate predestination.

TS: Next one is from Sean. Some scholars believe that Jewish religion has evolved over time eventually ending up at monotheism. The Divine Council worldview seems to blow this up. It also seems then to discredit that El and Yahweh are not always worshiped concurrently and that one came after the other and replaced the other. Is this true? If so, then could that be a reason why more scholars seem to not want to accept the binitarian view?

MSH: Well, the questioner is a little overly optimistic. Most scholars who are of the, it's hard to pick the right terms here. If I say critical scholars, it makes it sound like evangelical scholars aren't critical. If I say non-confessional scholars, it makes it sound like if your confessional scholar, you only have to think of one way or you can only think one way. I'll put it this way. Most non-confessional scholars, in other words, most scholars who aren't committed to some form of what we loosely call Bible believing Christianity, most of those people who don't fall into that category, they actually think the Divine Council idea proves the evolutionary idea. They're not afraid of it. They use it to promote the evolutionary idea from polytheism to monotheism because they look at things like Council references. They look at things like more than one elohim, a bunch of elohim flying around.

They look at that as polytheism and then they interpret certain passages in the Old Testament as getting rid of that and evolving toward monotheism. Like Psalm 82 when God sentences the gods to die like men, see God says all those gods are going to be put to death and in the Israelite mind they were put to death and we're only left with one so we've evolved to monotheism, that's how they'll take Psalm 82. They get there because they refuse or I should say they fail to define elohim like an Israelite would. Instead, they look at plural elohim and they assume that the word elohim has something to do with a unique set of attributes and that means there's more than one. There's more than one GOD here and that's polytheism. What I've been saying in my basic whole academic career is look, that's dumb because the departed human dead are called elohim.

Obviously, no Israelite is going to think that their dead relative is on par in terms of attributes and characteristics with the God of Israel or even any other god like Baal. They're just not the same. It has nothing to do with a set of unique attributes. It really has nothing to do with specific attributes at all. The reason why so many different things are called elohim is because elohim is a term you would use to describe where that entity properly belongs or lives. Every occupant, every disembodied occupant of the spirit world is an elohim. That's why it's plural and that's why it gets used that way. But if you're looking at elohim and thinking I'm going to look at elohim just like modern Americans or modern Westerners look at the letters GOD. When I look at the letters GOD I think of omniscience and omnipotence and omnipresence, and if I put an S on that, we got polytheism.

That's actually what they do. Scholars, I could give you names, that parse a Hebrew word the way a modern Westerner would parse an English word in terms of its meaning. It just doesn't make any sense and not only that, but they'll somehow ignore or miss all of the divine plurality stuff that shows up after this wonderful evolution to magnificent monotheism had occurred. Case in point, the Dead Sea Scrolls, I just published an article last year, it was part of my dissertation on there are a 160 references to plural elohim in the Dead Sea Scrolls, a couple

of dozen of which are also in Divine Council contexts in those texts. So what happened to this wonderful evolution? Didn't the people who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls get the memo? Hey, we're monotheists now. Don't write like this.

It's very clear in what they're saying and those scenes, if you actually go read them, that they're talking about animate spirit beings in the spiritual world, and over in that world, Yahweh is an elohim but none of these other ones are like Yahweh. He's unique. He's incomparable. They're very conservative in their theology. The people of Qumran were so conservative in their theology, they thought that the priests, the Pharisees, were heretics. It's crazy to think that they're like some kind of liberal or something. They get it. The people who don't get I think are the modern scholars who just parse these biblical terms in modern terms. So to get the full view of this, I would say you need to go up to moreunseenrealm.com, that's the companion website to the book, the Unseen Realm, and chapters 3 and 4, there are going to be links in there to some of the articles I've written specifically on this topic, some of the journal articles. One of those, actually two of them, I think you'll find if memory serves me, are about the El and Yahweh question. To an Orthodox Israelite, to a biblical writer, El and Yahweh were not separate deities.

To other Israelites who were not theologically careful or who were deliberately sort of apostate, they may have viewed them as separate characters. You have to realize that Israelites, there's just no one category for Israelites. It's kind of like today, people call themselves Christians. They could believe 100 different things. We have Christians who aren't even Trinitarian. I still accept Jesus on the cross but I'm a, I can't remember what the term is, certain types of Pentecostal, oneness Pentecostals. They'll insist on embracing the Gospel, the work of Jesus on the cross but yet they'll deny the Trinity. My point is just as today you have this vast and in some cases we look at strange variation under one term, in this case Christianity, it's the same thing in the ancient world.

What was Israelite religion? It depends who you talk to. If you're talking to the biblical writers and we only know what they think because of the text they gave us that we have, El and Yahweh are not viewed as separate deities. There are scholars who argue that they're vestiges of this still in the Old Testament. You're going to have to read my articles specifically on that issue to understand why I think that just doesn't make any sense and is actually contradicted by a number of passages in the Old Testament. So Divine Council stuff and the binitarian stuff does not deter people from arguing for an evolution from polytheism to monotheism. In many cases, it encourages them to argue for that. I've tried to explain here why they sort of take the paths that they do and how that works, but to get the fuller picture you have to reference the articles.

TS: This question is from Hans. Can you explain the meaning of Jew in the Bible? Does it refer to a member of the Kingdom of Judah only, and what about the meaning in the New Testament, Jew versus Israelite?

MSH: This question I think we actually have to spend an entire episode on because this is mind numbingly complicated. There are whole books, whole dissertations written, and I know because I'm looking at one here in my library as I speak, on this question. You get into issues like okay, Jew and Israelite different terms? If they are, what's the difference? If they're not, why are two terms used? Does it matter if how Jews or Israelites refer to themselves as opposed to someone else referring to them? Does the meaning change? I hate uses illustration but I think people will get what I mean. The N-word in our culture, if you're black, you can use that in certain contexts

because it's a self-reference and it's tolerated and a certain meaning is attributed to it or meanings whereas if you're outside that community, it's offensive to say that.

There are terms that means certain things within a community, you use them of yourself and things that the same term can mean something different if it's used by outsiders. You got that issue going on. What about Jew versus Judiazar in the New Testament? Are they the same or different? What about Gentiles? How do Gentiles in the New Testament use the term Jew? It's that insider outsider thing going on. Is the term ethnic or religious or both? We have even that problem today. Think about what Paul does with the term Jew. I actually referenced this passage in our last episode of Leviticus, but Romans 2:28, if you actually go to Romans 2:28, look at how Paul muddies the water. He says here, 'for no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly nor is circumcision outward and physical but a Jew is one inwardly and circumcision is a matter the heart by the Spirit.' So in other words, Paul, like a believing Gentile could be a Jew? Paul would say yes.

Why, because over in Galatians 3 he says that those who are the real children of Abraham are believers, whether Jew or Gentile or not. So this is an amazingly complicated question topic. Now for those, I don't know when we would do an episode on this but it would take a whole episode. If you don't want to wait for that, the most up-to-date recent work on this topic is a book by a guy named Graham Harvey and the title is the *True Israel*, subtitle *Uses of the Name's Jew, Hebrew, and Israel in Ancient Jewish and early Christian literature*. Now that's available on Amazon. The hardcover is \$252. That's the bad news but the good news is if you go up to Amazon, at least in short hearing of this, you can get it for \$9.99 in paperback. That's how I got it. So if you want to get a head start and read the most, this is a published dissertation rewritten for publication. It's a scholarly work. The publisher is Brill, very famous scholarly publisher. Get that book. I will give Trey a link to that on Amazon. Do not spend \$250. Watch which buttons you push. Spend your \$9.99. Get the paperback if you want to jump into the topic now unless money is no object.

TS: Our next question is from Greg in Waterloo, Iowa. Mike has used the term prescientific era several times. I was wondering if you could ask Mike to define what he means when he uses this term.

MSH: Yeah maybe I should use pre-modern or pre-modernity because that's essentially what I mean. Prescientific really refers to a set of pre-modern circumstances when it comes to the knowledge of the natural world. So what I'm referring to is that people in the biblical world, including biblical writers, did not have the knowledge about the natural world and its forces, biology, anatomy, chemistry, physics, whatever, that we have. Their knowledge precedes fundamental discoveries and points of knowledge only achieved in the modern world. So that's not to say there was no knowledge of the natural world in antiquity. There certainly was but it was primitive by today's standards. In the ancient world, science as they knew it and many people don't even want to use that term of ancient knowledge, but I'm not that much of a stickler.

But science as they knew it arose from experience of the natural world and the five senses. It did not arise from the scientific method or was not articulated or thought about in terms of discoveries deriving from the scientific method. Example, the ancients did naked eye astronomy and did it really well, but they knew nothing about celestial mechanics and celestial

objects beyond the reach of the naked eye. This is why Mesopotamian astronomical texts, and the Mesopotamians and the Babylonians were extraordinarily detailed, the Assyrians, in their astronomy. But you will never find an object beyond the Saturn. Why, because that's all they could see and they don't know exactly how things work. They don't know celestial mechanics. What they know is what they can observe and mark down and watch for repeated patterns. It's not science by today's standards but they are exploring and investigating and learning about the natural world.

Another example, the ancients certainly knew plants that could cure you of things or reduce pain, induce an abortion, just heal certain injuries faster. They knew stuff like that. They knew that children shared traits with their parents but they don't know anything about genetics, chemistry, biochemistry, heredity on a genetics level, how it works. They don't know why mutations occur or stuff like that. Third example, last one, the ancients knew a lot about applied physics, leverage, mathematics, to build things. They were very good at this but they don't know how to split the atom. They don't know anything about that. So when I saw prescientific, I really do mean pre-modern and I will try to use that term instead. I don't like pre-modern though because it makes ancient sound like they're dragging their knuckles and Neanderthalish kind of brutes and unintelligent. I don't want to communicate that either because they weren't. They were really smart. It's just that they didn't have the tools and the methods to know what we know today about the natural world.

TS: The next one's from Travis. Mike has mentioned throughout the series that there isn't a one-to-one relationship between the sacrificial system and Jesus but he mentioned in passing a few weeks ago that he sees substitutionary atonement in the offerings. Can he expand on how the sacrificial system informs our understanding of Christ's death and how it accomplished salvation?

MSH: In terms of the sacrificial system, an impure person had to have a substitute to take care of the impurity. You couldn't take care of your own impurity with your own self so there has to be something that God deemed acceptable to accept you in sacred space and in the life of the community, at least as it pertains to sacred space. So by definition or from the get go, if you're polluted, you're not coming anywhere close to the place that you need to come without the means to undo your pollution and that ain't you. So it has to be something else. So just in principle, substitution is necessary there. But there's also substitution in the sense that when sanctity was compromised or violated, the teaching point is that there had to be some penalty for that.

There had to be some fixing of that. Something had gone wrong with you that made you ineligible for sacred space. There doesn't have to be a moral violation. Most of the time, it had nothing to do with that. It could be something innocuous. I touched a woman when she was menstruating. OK, you're unclean now. It has nothing to do with a moral offense and there were lots and lots and lots of these. So without a substitution, because you're not coming anywhere close to the sanctuary here without a substitution, something that will enable you to, in the worst circumstances, be punished directly by God, possibly lose your life, without that, the sanctuary was in perpetual threat of contamination. So that's why we had to have something, whether an animal or plant or grain, whatever it was depending on your level. If you were very poor, it didn't necessarily have to be a blood sacrifice.

We've been through these passages in Leviticus in the series so I think the audience is fairly well familiar with them. But something had to be brought in your place just in a broad conceptual sense to decontaminate you. Depending on the offense, not having that could be pretty severe. Other issues were reparations. Let's say you did something where a "guilt" offering was needed, and the better translation of that is the reparation offering. You yourself couldn't make restitution necessarily, depending on what the situation was, so something had to be brought into the picture to not only rectify the situation, your guilt, but also to compensate either God or compensate the person wronged. So by definition, you have to have something else along with you. These needs and these fixes are conceptually quite distinct from what we're talking about, what the New Testament talks about, what we're talking about or what the New Testament talks about with what happens on the cross.

We can talk about Jesus being a typologically our substitute and our opportunity for redemption. But there are a number of disconnects because of the specific circumstances with the Old Testament system and the all-encompassing nature and the moral nature of salvation when it comes to the work of Jesus on the cross. So the fact that a thing is analogous doesn't mean it's the same in all the elements. It can be quite different. This is why the writer of Hebrews is very correct by saying the blood of bulls and goats just ain't cutting it. They are a very inferior system, a very inferior substitute, if you will, to what we have with Jesus so it's kind of insane to want to go back to that or to think of it in the same terms. Let's just think a little bit more broadly about it. Sacrifice just in and of itself, you had to have that for access to God in the Old Testament.

You couldn't have access to God, you couldn't worship God as an Israelite without these things because they defined your proximity to sacred space and whatnot. Now, sacrifice made relationship possible on that level and prevented God from withdrawing his presence or judging people directly for violation. But none of that was really directed to salvation as we think of it in this need for moral spiritual reconciliation between you and God. Example, how can somebody like Nahum and the leper ever be saved? He was from Syria and he goes back to Syria. He confesses that Yahweh is the God of gods and he asked to take dirt back. I've used this illustration a number of times. So like if he couldn't offer a sacrifice, he couldn't be saved? No, it's very clear that he had the necessary faith. He aligned himself with the true God. He was a believer.

Rahab, same thing, she was commended for her faith before becoming part of Israel. She's in Hebrews 11 and she's commended for something she does before she ever joined the Israelite community, before she ever had access or had any sense of sacrifice. Sacrifice wasn't about salvation is the point I'm getting to. The sacrifice on the cross of Jesus has everything to do with salvation in this sense of there's a moral offense, there's a spiritual barrier, a spiritual estrangement from God that needs reconciliation. That's a that's a different thing and it requires a different kind of sacrifice, Jesus, set aside or set against what you see in the Old Testament. I think that's probably the best way to put it because two things are analogous does not mean that they have to align in every instance because often they will not.

TS: Our next question is from Garth. In Leviticus 6:1-7, these seem like definitive deliberate acts against the law except for the realizing language which denotes that the acts were actually unintentional and thus how it fits in with these other restitution offerings. The ESV shows the

possibility of unintentionally much better than many other translations, like the NIV where the realizing aspect is simply stated as becomes guilty.

MSH: There is something of a translation variance. I actually mentioned this exception in one of the episodes in Leviticus. I don't recall which one but I said something about if the person felt guilty and confessed, then expiation was allowed in certain cases where a violation happened to be deliberate. But the reverse is also true. If there was no confession of the act, then bringing a sacrifice accomplished nothing. So these verses make confession mandatory for being factored into sacrifice in these situations because there was no witness in the circumstance.

My larger point about unintentionality, it's sort of negatively stated which might be confusing but high-handed sins, intentional deliberate sins against God, against his person were not tolerated. In fact, you couldn't atone for blasphemy and murder because it was killing God an effigy and all that sort of stuff. Unconfessed sins against fellow humans couldn't simply be wiped away by sacrifice. There had to be contrition, so the sacrifice itself didn't have any value per se in these instances, and this is the part in Leviticus, the chapter that brings these up. Confession was necessary else these cases wouldn't be an exception so God allowed that.

But the sacrifice itself wouldn't have any effect if there was no contrition and remorse. You would sort of be in the same spot as the sins that didn't have a solution. But many other intentional sins get no opportunity. There is no ransom like for murder and things like that. Maybe that helps but the key principle is that the sacrifice itself doesn't take care of this intentional act without, and God allows this, without some evidence of contrition in specific cases mentioned in those verses.

TS: Okay, the last question is from Greg. I just listened to Leviticus 11 podcast concerning dietary laws. In the flood story of Genesis, Noah takes seven pairs of clean animals into the ark. This was centuries before the dietary laws were given at Sinai. How did Noah know what was clean or not? I'm assuming God told him but the Bible is silent on the matter.

MSH: This is actually a nice catch by the questioner because this is yet another reason why many people believe the Genesis 6-8, really Genesis 1-11, was composed after the Mosaic era. I personally think that Genesis 1-11 is at least predominantly post-Mosaic because of the repeated Babylonian context for basically everything in there, most everything in there. In the context of Moses, it's not Babylonian, it's Egyptian. So having said that, there is actually a couple ways you could look at this. Most people, most scholars look at this and say it's there because it was written later and it's trying to link what's happening here to the system of clean and unclean so we know Noah was a good guy. He wouldn't offer an unclean sacrifice. Let's just start there.

You'll notice if you read through not only this passage specifically quoted, which I believe would be Genesis 7:2, but also in chapter 8. The clean or unclean animals here do not refer really to food, to animals being considered consumed. The reference here isn't to food laws. Permission to eat was apparently, at least from the biblical text, only given by God after the flood. So the clean and unclean animals that are loaded onto the ark don't have anything do with what you're going to eat. The point of them is sacrifice. If you go to Genesis 7:2 for instance and I'll turn there real quickly and read the statement that's made. Let's just start in verse 1.

Then the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. ²Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate

MSH: This is obviously before the Flood. It’s a precursor and the permission to eat meat had not yet been given so you can't really presume that the clean and unclean distinction here is about food laws is the point. So how do we account for this? One view is that this is here and it refers to sacrifice because it doesn't refer to food. It refers to sacrifice. We don’t know the sacrificial system yet. We only get that with Moses so this must be post-Mosaic. It is put here, maybe a later gloss, maybe the whole thing is composed after the Mosaic period to avoid any possible suggestion about whether Noah would've offered an unclean animal. So it either creates or presumes consistency for sacrifice in this regard, otherwise somebody could come along and say it wasn't really righteous. How do we know he didn’t offer unclean animals, that kind of thing.

That's a possibility. There are other ways to look at this. You could presume that in the context of sacrifice that the clean and unclean distinction in fact existed in Israel before Moses, before this is written. Let's say that you're going to assume Mosaic authorship of the flood account and even before you get in the biblical history of the sacrificial system, you could say that this is a distinction for sacrifice that everybody just sort of knew. All the descendants of Abraham, they just sort of knew some animals you don't sacrifice, others you do and then this just gets woven into the story in different ways by Moses the author. You could say that. You could assume that. There’s no biblical text that tells us that. We don't have clean and unclean distinctions. For instance, when the patriarchs offer animals, we don't get instances of an unclean animal being offered, but we don’t get a statement about clean and unclean. So, it’s an assumption. It might have some coherence but you don't actually have the statement so how would you know.

I'm not terribly bothered by the first option, the post-Mosaic. I don't see why every word in the Torah has to be written by Moses or in Moses time period. The law of Moses can be the law about Moses, the law associated with Moses, the law focused on Moses. It's a simple construct relationship between two nouns in Hebrew. To insist that whenever you see it, it only means that the law that originated with Moses is an over reading of the text. This is a bogeyman that we don't need to fear. So I don't mind the first one. The second one is possible. The third option I hate to say it this way but I’m going to. You can just pretend the distinction isn't there. I don't advise this one because it's cheating but you’ll actually run into this in commentaries. I have an example. Some evangelical commentators will do this and they basically play word games to say there's nothing to look at here. There isn’t really even a question. Here is a quotation from one commentary and it says this.

“The text does not say that Noah is to take aboard clean and unclean animals. He is to bring with him animals that are clean and those that are not clean.”

MSH: What's the difference? What's the difference? This is an academic commentary. I laugh but here’s the difference. In Levitical material, the word for unclean is *tame*, spelled *taw-may’*.

In Genesis, the phrase not clean is not that word. It's not the Levitical word. It's *lo tahor*, literally meaning not clean, instead of unclean. So *tame*, unclean, versus *lo tahor*, not clean. So some commentators will say that's just a huge difference because they don't use the same word that's used in Leviticus. Well, does it really mean anything different? I'll read his statement again.

“The text does not say that Noah is to take aboard clean and unclean animals. He is to bring with him animals that are clean and those that are not clean.”

MSH: For my taste, I don't really see much of a difference there. Yeah I know the Hebrew lemmas are different but would an Israelite look at that and think of it like an evangelical who wants to affirm Mosaic authorship in every word? I doubt it. I really doubt it. Trying to explain it in this way to me is just really, it's kind of sophistry. It's like trying to sound academic when you're really not, when you're really not making any sense and that is sort of how I look at the statement. I don't think it's a coherent thing to say.