Naked Bible Podcast Transcript
Episode 148
Q&A 19
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Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Episode Summary

Dr. Heiser answers your questions about:
- Profanity
- Choosing a church
- The inerrancy of Scripture
- The "particular one" speaking in Daniel 9
- Whether Psalm 82 has a past or future fulfillment
- Levels in hell
- Whether there are females in the divine council
- The purpose of the law.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, our 19th Q&A episode. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing?

MH: Pretty good, pretty good. Ready to hit some questions. We have some interesting ones, I'm sure. Nineteen Q&A's... it's just hard to believe. Every time we do one of these, I hear the number and go, "Really?" (laughs)

TS: And they're one of our more popular types of shows—the Q&A's. People enjoy that. And please continue to email me (treystricklin@gmail.com—you can get that email on our nakedbiblepodcast.com website) if you have any questions that you want to be considered for our Q&A shows. I keep them all in the queue. We will eventually get to them. We may take some time because we don't do Q&A episodes every week. Nonetheless, I save your questions and I promise you that we will eventually get to your questions so please continue to send your questions in. Also, Mike, I just want to mention that we also created an official Facebook group page on top of our Facebook podcast page. That's the Naked Bible Group page on Facebook. People are already having great conversations, so it's just a safe place to go in and discuss all things Heiser/Divine Council or anything Bible related. So feel free to go join our Facebook group page, if you

will. Go check it out. Mike will be in and out of the group, answering questions here and there.

MH: I take a look at it a couple times a week. I do look at it and chime in here and there. Yep.

TS: There you go. Also, Mike, we're going to announce our book giveaway winners. Instead of three, Mike is so sweet (laughter), we've decided to give away *four* book! Four winners now. Mike and I would love to announce their names, so here they are.

MH: Go for it!

TS: We've got Jessie, Matthew, Daniel, and Marnie. I hope I say your name right. Those are the four winners, Mike. Tell them what they've won!

MH: They've won a copy of the new book, *Reversing Hermon*. I will probably get copies from the publisher for purposes just like this during the first week of April. So I would say I will sign those to our winners and they will go out at some point in April. Not too long, but I don't have them yet because it hasn't been officially launched yet. But we're getting there. Sometime in April, those will go out in the mail.

TS: Congratulations again to Jessie, Matthew, Daniel, and Marnie. We appreciate you all championing the Naked Bible Podcast on social media and getting the word out there. We thank you for that. Mike, I wanted to mention somebody else. Barbara sent me a message on Facebook. She told me that she prints off the transcripts and sends them to someone she knows in prison, where they circulate and they've become very popular. What a great idea!

MH: That's awesome! That is a good idea.

TS: It's a great idea to do that. We appreciate Barbara for doing that. And then, Mike, we need to give one more shout-out to some colleagues of yours that have their own podcast—the *Bible as Literature Podcast*.

MH: Yeah, one of the fellas behind this podcast is Rich Benton. He and I overlapped a little bit in graduate school at Wisconsin. I finished a little bit before he did. Rich (Dr. Benton) and Father Marc Boulos have their own podcast that is focused on biblical literature in context, and we like that here. The *Bible as Literature Podcast*... Their focus is to try to bring listeners an in-depth discussion of a particular biblical text or passage in a format that's short enough for a morning commute but long enough to be substantial. There's content here. They also deal with questions to keep listeners engaged, but the orientation is the Bible as literature, as the title suggests. It's weekly, so every week. Father Marc and Rich lead a verse by verse discussion of some passage or narrative, and

their focus is historical and literary context with implications on how that affects interpretation and, of course, why anybody should care—why that should matter. So it's a podcast that I think for our listeners, who are quite interested in content and in looking at Scripture in light of its own context (not some other context)… This would be another podcast that sort of has the same spirit as this one—trying to approach Scripture for what it is and what the writers intended to do, how they did it, and how they wanted to be understood by their own original readers and listeners. For us, as well... We have to have that sort of filtered to us through scholars like Rich and Father Marc, that this is their orientation academically. I think it's going to be a useful listen for many of our listeners.

TS: That sounds good. So again, go check out the *Bible as Literature Podcast*. And I guess, Mike, it's time for our podcast! Are you ready?

MH: Yeah, let's get into it.

TS: The first question is from Trevor:

He wants you to do an exposé on the spirit of profanity.

MH: I would assume by that question that it refers to bad language. I'm going to go with that assumption here. I'm not completely sure of that because "profane" can refer to lots of different things. This is kind of a short one because I don't think there is a spirit of profanity. I think people use profanity because they want to use profanity. There's also a little bit of ambiguity (at least in my head) for what is meant by profanity, if indeed Trevor's question is about what comes out of somebody's mouth. There's blasphemy and blasphemous talk, and that's certainly prohibited in Scripture. It doesn't take too much thought to say, "Don't do that. We don't blaspheme God's name or anything about God—his character and nature."

Then there's the academic term "scatological language," which we've actually talked about on this podcast before. There's no prohibition against scatological language in Scripture, so it's a wisdom issue. This is actually a good place to sort of explain what I mean there. If you have certain issues that are not specifically condemned or addressed one way or the other in Scripture, this is sort of the way Scripture treats such things. The wise person, if they don't have a prohibition or condemnation that's laid out, it's left to the individual to be wise and be God-honoring in the situation (whatever this is). Scripture writers do use scatological language. In Ezekiel (which we're going through), there were some sections where he used a lot of it. So there might be an occasion where that's appropriate, but I wouldn't take a lack of condemnation (the lack of a "thou shalt not" kind of thing) as a license to be coarse or just to be a jerk. But again, I don't think there is a spirit or a demon or anything else lurking behind each individual prompting them to use this sort of language. We don't need a divine being to prompt us to do all sort of things because our hearts are wicked. Scripture is very clear on

that. A lot of this kind of thing, we need to own it and take the blame ourselves because that's pretty much where it's at.

TS: What about swearing specifically? Aren't they just words that society in the modern culture... the meanings placed upon them are not necessarily evil?

MH: There is some of that. Some of it is cultural. Specific swear words have histories that either evolve or devolve into certain situations or contexts that make our culture judge them more harshly than what they might have been before. That is a factor. But ultimately, part of wisdom (just living wisely) is not trying to be a person that behaves—or in this case talks—in such a way that it doesn't convey virtue. As Christians, we want to walk like Jesus walked and do what he did. Language is part of that. Behind a lot of this language there could be vindictiveness, anger, or some attempt to ridicule that is just really offensive. We have to know all these things and judge all these things in the context of our own culture. I tend to think that's actually why the Bible relegates this sort of thing to a wisdom issue, because culture is a factor and that changes all the time. So the

10:00   Bible asks believers to make wise decisions so that they will have a good reputation with everyone they meet, whether they believe what they believe or don't. That we live peaceably with all men, as Paul said. This is part of it—not being offensive.

TS: Okay. Chris has our next question.

He would like to know who Dr. Heiser thinks is the closest to being correct: Western Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Dispensationalists (whether Acts 2, mid-Acts, or Acts 28)... Presbyterian, Methodist, etc., etc. If there were hundreds of churches in my town (one from every single tradition), if I could choose any one of them, which would he say gets closest to getting it right?

MH: (Laughing) None and all. There's nobody that's going to be closest to getting it right. The question sort of assumes that we can with a high degree of precision know what is right for all sorts of things. Is this general doctrine? Well, a lot of these groups that are in this question really are where they are because of hermeneutics. We're not omniscient so we can't say there's this one inspired hermeneutical method and this is it and this is where it's going to lead you. It's not that simple and Scripture is not that clear in terms of how to approach certain passages. When I discuss doctrine, listeners are probably familiar with me saying, "What you believe on X, Y, or Z is ultimately a result of decisions you make about how to approach a passage, how to approach the Bible, how to approach a whole book." What you decide beforehand—before you even look at the text—is going to ultimately dictate where you end up on a certain doctrinal issue. So the Bible doesn't give us specific instructions on what approaches to take.

Example: the book of Revelation, which naturally is going to deal with eschatology. There's no footnote in the book or something at the back or front of the book or anywhere in the book that says you should interpret the book of Revelation as a linear chronology or as a cycle of recapitulations or by both of those things. And then you ask, "Which passage is this..." Well, we don't get a grocery list for that. So whatever decisions you make are going to lead you to different doctrinal conclusions. There is no answer to which one is *best* because, lacking omniscience, we don't really know what the absolutely correct way to approach any given passage might be. There are some things that are easier than others or closer to say there's really no ambiguity on these certain things. That's how I tend to approach things. I would ask someone in all of these camps about the Gospel. To me, the Gospel is primary. What *is* the message of the Gospel? Does your group or denomination teach things that muddy the clarity of the Gospel? I could look at this list and say that all of them do that! So we need to exercise some care. All of them will accrue things that may or may not make the Gospel get lost within the system.

Just to pick out a few... You've got Eastern Orthodox or Reformed denominations and Catholicism and what they say about baptism, for example. That may or may not muddy the clarity of the Gospel for someone. I'm not one who believes that if you're a Catholic it's impossible for you to hear a clear presentation of the Gospel. I know Catholics that can articulate the Gospel very well. The problem is, how many people in the pew (and you could ask this of any denomination) are really thinking theologically? If you get someone who's in a Catholic church, they might be there for one of ten different reasons (whatever that is). But they know the Gospel, they understand it, they know how to distinguish the faith and works issue. But I've actually had Catholics tell me that basically the Catholic church has just screwed up on evangelism because certain things it says do muddy the clarity of the Gospel and people can go away from a homily or some Catholic writer and be totally confused that they have to somehow merit in and of themselves salvation when they really don't. Merit to a really thinking Catholic theologian refers to something else over here. Well that's nice. Did you have to get a PhD in theology in your own system to be able to distinguish that, and how many people in the pew aren't going to get that, and therefore they're not going to get the real Gospel? I've actually had Catholics say that is a real problem within the church—the Gospel gets lost very easily to the average person in the pew. Well, that's a problem! That, to me, is a significant problem. I wouldn't want to be in a context where that happens. But they're not the villain. I've been in many Baptist churches, Bible churches, where you've got to wonder if anyone has really thought about the Gospel lately.

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I'll give you an indication of this. I posted something about this on the blog. Six months ago or more, we experimented with a podcast called "Questions Aloud," and it's now up on Faithlife TV. In one of those episodes, the episode was supposed to be about what missional church planters actually do. The show is really Mike griping about something and then my partner, Johnny, talking me in

off the ledge. "What am I overlooking, what am I misunderstanding? Just tell me, Johnny, because I have this thought." We try to isolate on questions that we know lots of people are thinking about but they're afraid to ask because Christians are supposed to be ultra-polite or something and they're not supposed to ask pointed questions. We throw that to the wind in this particular show. This one, again, was what do missional church planters do. What is that? Because my exposure to them is basically they sit in coffee shops and they're community organizers. They don't do any evangelism at all. I know that's an overstatement because I do know other church planters that would call themselves missional and they're for real. They go out and they try to win people to the Lord. But there are other ones that aren't missionaries, they're "vacationaries." That's what they do. So we had somebody who has had a lot of personal exposure to this and this is part of what they do, and it was unbelievably difficult. This is a large evangelical community-type church. This is not Catholicism or any kind of church-ism. It was unbelievably difficult to get this guy to articulate the Gospel. I soft-balled him through the whole interview and just couldn't get it out of him. I had no idea that this was going to be the case. It exposed my own ignorance of what really goes on in evangelical churches. So when I answer this question about who's right, the Gospel has to be primary. Do not put yourself and your family, your kids, whatever, in a situation where the Gospel is going to get lost, altered, or forgotten. That is the main thing. Other doctrines… you're just going to have to pick your poison. If you're making a church decision based on a positive answer to a question like, "Will I agree with everything that this church teaches or is in it?" you're going to be looking for a long time! If you're a thinking person, especially nowadays, you can't assume that anywhere you go is going to be just totally in line with what you think. What you're really looking for is a place where the leadership is secure enough to let you have a different opinion—that you don't get run out of the place or marginalized or put on a shelf when it comes to service just because you don't see eye-to-eye with the pastor or elders or whoever on this particular issue. If you find somebody who's secure enough to let you think and let you disagree and you've got 70, 80, 90 percent agreement on everything else, that's actually a good situation—assuming, again, that the Gospel doesn't get lost or altered or muddied and that you're actually in a context where hopefully you're learning something on a Sunday morning. One of the reasons why we're in the process now of trying to connect podcast listeners to each other is that I get people all the time that tell me how isolated they feel because they are thinking Christians. They want to know Scripture. The issue isn't, "Do you agree with Mike?" The issue is, "Did you learn something?" And they like that. Disagree or agree with me or not, it doesn't matter. That's what I'm hoping to foster here—that you're learning *something*. They feel like this podcast or my website or something is like the only place they have to go to get fed. There are people in that situation. What I recommend to people like that is that if you have a church and all you get out of that church is good relationships, good friendships, maybe a good program for your kids, it's not a bad decision to stay there and then just take the responsibility on yourself to feed yourself. I'm trying

to help people do that so that they don't just jump ship and throw the baby out with the bathwater, that kind of thing.

20:00   So please, don't anyone... the questioner, Chris, and anybody else who's listening here… You are *never* going to find a church that you can look at and say, "I know that they are a hundred percent right on everything." It just isn't that simple. Many doctrinal positions and disagreements are based on hermeneutics. That's just the way it is. And there are ambiguities in Scripture. That's just the way it is, so you need to focus on the core doctrines. Are they taught with clarity? Do they get lost? Do they get redefined? If they get lost or redefined, I would say to get out of there. But beyond that, you're just going to have to pick what really helps you and your family as a believer or group of believers the most in whatever way it does, and then sort of go from there.

TS: I would just add that I don't know if church is necessarily about getting it right as it is about celebration, too. I mean, you're there to worship God.

MH: You're there to worship and be with like-minded people and connect and have your kids meet like-minded people. There's a lot of reasons why being attached to a church is a good thing, but it can be difficult if the leadership is so intimidated by a thinking person—a person that has questions. They're honest questions. You can tell when you talk to people if this person is just picking a scab or trying to be a trouble-maker or if this is a real question. That's a good thing. Asking genuine questions is a good thing. But if your leadership just cannot handle that, like "Oh, I don't know and I can't say I don't know because that will be a chink in my armor and people won't think I'm omniscient"… I don't want to caricature pastors like they sit there and think of ways to be that guy, because the congregations in many places help create that unfortunate situation when they just hold the pastor out as this person and then the pastor can fall victim to believing that dead caricature—believing that I have to be this person that all these people think I am and I can't ever say I'm wrong or that I don't know. Yes, you can! Yes, you can. You just be honest with people, you make it a focus of a study. Go find out. But there are a lot of people who just *can't* do that—it's a threat to them. And that can be a really difficult situation. Again, this isn't a one-size-fits-all kind of answer because it's not a one-size-fits-all question, either. But I would agree with Trey. There are lots of reasons other than level and quality of content to be in a church, but you don't want to be in a situation where you're just not getting the Gospel and the core doctrines. I would say that's the kind of thing to be on the lookout for, and if you detect it then you need to start looking somewhere else.

TS: Well, that's why you listen to this show, too, right? (laughter)

MH: This isn't a church, but a lot of people use it to feed themselves. That's why we're here.

TS: Right. And then also, Mike, you mentioned Johnny. Do you want to mention the biblewordnerd.com? How's that going?

MH: Yeah! He actually moved to California back closer to where he grew up, but I'll hear periodically and get little reports. Apparently, people are still finding the course and purchasing that. Everything I've heard... The URL is biblewordnerd.com. It's a word study course that helps people whether you have software or you don't—if you're using free tools on the internet. It takes you through a process of how to do word studies. It's not a checklist method kind of thing. It's just "Here's how you would study biblical words in Hebrew or Greek." It's not a twelve-step method or anything like that. Every video in it teaches you how to do a different thing and talks about why you'd want to do it, and then gives you examples of how it can yield information. It's not about "Oh do this and then go buy this software." If you want to do that, you can. But you can watch what he has set up and if you want to do that with free tools, he tells you where to find those tools and how to use them. It's really a good thing to learn how to do this thing that people call "word study" because, believe it or not, if you Google it, you're going to find a lot of discussion about word studies but you'll find almost nothing on how to do it. It's just a great course.

TS: Okay, our next question is from Joel in the UK. His question is:

If the Bible is factually incorrect on point A, what prevents it from being incorrect on point B (for example, salvation)? Or can the Bible be held as a reliable document if there are parts that are falsifiable? Or how can one say God is the author of an inconsistent Scripture without calling him a liar, which he says in the Scripture he is not?

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MH: The question, again, presumes a certain number of things. This isn't in the question, but in Q&A's and on the website and even in the Faithlife group for Lexham Press for people that are discussing *Unseen Realm*... Typically where this question arises it's, "Well, the Bible has this cosmology that we know isn't scientifically correct and Mike says the reason for that is that God picked people and didn't change their thinking—didn't transform them into 21st century scientists before he could use them to write Scripture." And I do say that, and I mean it. What they produced had high communicative value for their own day, but they're not making scientific statements. So how do we know... If that's wrong, what about what the Bible says about the unseen realm or something like that?

We should actually spend a little time on this question because, on the one hand I could tell you to go up to the nakedbiblepodcast site. Go to "New? Start here!" and look up the videos. There's one video there on how Mike looks at Scripture, so you're going to get some of this there. But we need to go a little bit beyond that. When it comes to the cosmology thing, without making that the focus of this answer because I want to get off it and answer it a different way… But in that

regard, these are statements made that if we believe God is the creator and he is the author of general revelation and what is true about the thing he has created is true because this is the way he has created something, and because we're part of the natural world we learn about the natural world... We learn what makes it tick, we learn how God made it through certain tools—tools of science. That's what science is for. And we're supposed to do that. We're supposed to subdue the earth. Part of that is learning about it so we know what to do with it, how to steward it, so on and so forth. That's one area. But things like the supernatural world, we can't test with the tools of science. It's a totally different thing. So you can't say, "Oh well, if something over here in the natural world is primitive by modern scientific standards, then that dictates how we should look at some other claim in the spiritual world." On what basis? It's not a scientific basis because the tools of science don't apply. The only basis you have is philosophical, logical coherence. So if you're asking if biblical claims about the supernatural world can be defended without the appeal to Scripture itself on philosophical coherence grounds, the answer is, "You betcha!" It's been that way for millennia. So it's not that one thing over here looks this way and that means the other thing can't be true, either. That is flawed thinking, but it's a very understandable question that I get all the time.

Let's go back here to the actual question itself. The question assumes a few things. It assumes, for instance… what is falsifiable? What do we mean by falsifiable? Here's an example. Is the phrase "law of God" falsifiable when we find many laws from the Torah showing up in whole or in part in ancient Near Eastern law codes? You might be thinking, "No, why would that be falsifiable? Who cares if the Torah has a law. The Code of Hammurabi has the law, too." Oh, but it's the law of God! And the Code of Hammurabi is older than the Torah (we know that by the Bible's own chronology), so how can it be called the Law of God when this law existed before Moses or whoever wrote the Torah wrote it down? "That's a lie! That's falsifiable!" You get into some really strained logic here because of the terms that you've chosen and because, also, of the way we think about those terms. I would say, "No, it's silly to think that the existence of this law in Hammurabi falsifies the Torah because the Torah is called the law of God. Those two things... that's not clear thinking."

So one of my questions is, "What do we mean by falsifiable?" It's a term that can get thrown around a little bit too loosely. What do we mean by an error? This is actually a really difficult question because when you ask, "What counts as an error?" you're going to get lots of different answers for some pretty specific reasons. When I look at cosmological statements in the Old Testament that we know because we've been "discovering" God's creation for a few millennia now, and we know that this statement made two millennia ago or three or four millennia ago (whatever it is), we know that statement does not correspond to reality in terms of the natural world. Why would we consider that an error? We would only consider it an error if the Bible was supposed to give us a statement that we are asked to believe is binding truth—that this is a statement that all

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people from here on forward who read this must regard this as truth. I don't think the Bible does any of that ever when it comes to the natural world, and I think the reason is obvious. God knew the people that he picked. He knew what they knew, and he doesn't download new information so that what they write (what he has them write) will make happy a person living in the 21st century. I've got news for you: a thousand years from now, people are going to look back on our science and giggle. They're going to say, "Can you believe that they believed this? Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha..." To me, it is the wisdom of God to not have Scripture be for that—to not have Scripture be to teach us about science. Why? Because what Scripture is actually here for (to teach us truths about the spiritual world)—those things transcend science. They will always be true a thousand years from now, just like they were three thousand years ago because they're not linked to the natural world. The Bible is not here to give us scienc-y stuff about the natural world. God uses people who say things about the natural world and he doesn't bother to correct them. He doesn't bother to give them advanced knowledge so that they would get it right three thousand years later. That is evidence that God didn't correct them and didn't make them different than what they were. That is evidence that God didn't care and that that wasn't the purpose behind this thing that God was producing through humans called the Bible.

A lot of this stuff is how you look at the whole concept—these concepts of inspiration and inerrancy—how you frame the concept *and* what you mean and how you frame the terminology. Here's the dirty little secret: everybody does this. There is no one definition of inspiration that has been tried and true throughout the history of the Church—of the believing community. If you've been taught that, you've been taught something that is an error, that is wrong, that just is not true. It does not conform to reality at all. There's no one definition of these inspiration/inerrancy things.

Let me just give you an example. If you went to a standard theology book (something like Erickson or Grudem or whatever), you're going to get different theories of inspiration. People have come up with different ways to look at things throughout the history of the believing community. It's just the way it is. There's no one-size-fits-all. One of them is called the "verbal theory." In this view, they say that the Holy Spirit directed the writers in the choice of their words. But then they'll deny that that means dictation. You say, "How can you have God choosing the words and it not be dictation?" Well, they need to deny it's dictation because there are obviously places where a dictation approach to the Bible is going to get you in trouble. The phenomena of the text will get you in trouble and you end up having to deny your own definition. Scholars know that, but they want to affirm Scripture to the word level, yet they don't want it to be dictation. A lot of this comes from 2 Timothy 3:16 ("God breathed"). Again, there are some people who have understood that to mean that God whispered every last word into the writers' head or just plopped it in there so that the writers didn't have any independent thought as to word choice. Every word came from the mouth of God, as it were. You have to ask yourself a question: Is that really what

theopneustos means? Is that really the way we're supposed to understand it? A lot of people have said, "No! It doesn't mean that. *Theopneustos* means that all Scripture originated from God. It comes from him in some way that doesn't have to be whispering the words." So right there you have a fundamental distinction on how people envision this thing we call inspiration.

If you get away from dictation or the "verbal view" you start to get into what would be sort of more Providential views—that God used people, God is the ultimate origin for what we find in Scripture but he lets people write as they would because they're people. In the day and age in which they lived, people wrote a certain way and they used certain genres. They used certain expressions. All these things are very obviously in the Bible. The Bible does use genres, expressions, figures of speech... all this stuff. It's a very human product. Scholars know this. This is why scholars very wisely want to get away from this dictation idea, or the "verbal view but it's not dictation" view (however that works).

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Let me give you an example. There's a quote from Erickson in his theology. Erickson wants to deny dictation, but he wants to affirm the verbal view. Listen to this:

> The work of the Holy Spirit is so intense that each word is the exact word God wants used at that point to express the message.

That's on page 175. Okay... what does "so intense" mean? Well, it can't mean whispering in the ear! It can't mean plopping the word in the head! So what does it mean? Frankly, it doesn't mean anything! (laughs) These are word games that theologians like to play so that they can say, "I'm not in this camp, I'm over here somewhere." But they don't actually answer the question and they still lead to difficulties in talking about inspiration. You've got to advocate a view that honors the human element because—lo and behold—God used people. He didn't change them and make them into something they weren't. Of course, if he did that he'd have to change their audience, too, because they wouldn't understand the advanced knowledge coming from this human being about science or anything else. Readers expect writers to write in a certain way that is comprehensible. You can't have someone from a different time and place doing something and have the result be understandable. To me, these are *very*, very simple thoughts—very obvious thoughts. I'll admit, in the way inspiration is taught and talked about, a lot of people just don't affirm some things that I think are pretty obvious (and lots of other people think are pretty obvious). So you're looking for a two-sided process in inspiration: something that honors the humanness of the thing created and also honors the Providential hand of God, where God molded the biblical writers for their task throughout their whole lives. He molded and prepared them for the time and place that they would write. And the results that they produced were good enough for God. If they were good enough for God, they should be good enough for us. Humans were chosen to

produce the text. You actually get a hint of this in Jeremiah 25:13, where God considers the words of the writers his own words. But it doesn't say he dictated them. It says:

> **[13] I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it,**
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> **everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the**
>
> **nations.**

Now, you could view that in reverse: "Well, God must have uttered all the words in Jeremiah's head. That's why God is saying this." But if you actually just look at the verse, you could go at it from the other direction. What Jeremiah wrote, God looked at and said, "Yep. That's what I wanted you to say. That captures it well. Got it. Bingo. Good job." That's the view I think we need to take because of the phenomena that arise from the text.

I should throw in something about inerrancy here. Believe it or not, there have been lots of different view of inerrancy. Erickson has one that's called "absolute inerrancy." I'll just read a little excerpt here again because I'm looking at his section now on inerrancy. He says:

> The Bible, which includes rather detailed treatments of matters both scientific and historical, is fully true.

An absolute inerrantist would say that. If you have something that the Bible says scientifically that conflicts with science (the known realia of the world), well... we may not be able to explain that, but science must be wrong and the Bible must be right. So when the Bible talks about a cosmic tree that was felled that all the animals of the earth lived on and that's a known part of ancient Near-Eastern cosmology, "Oh, it must be true somehow!" And usually what happens is, "Oh, that's metaphorical." Yeah, it is for us. It wasn't for them. They actually think that this happened in great antiquity, and that somewhere there was this tree or something like that. You get the solid dome. You get the mountains. You get the pillars of the earth. They thought this was the way things were constructed. You go to the book of Hebrews. They really thought there were human persons inside the loins of the human father—the male—and he deposits that into the woman. We know this not the way babies are made because we can make them in a 40:00   dish. We know this is not the case. But they didn't! And God didn't bother to correct them and update their knowledge when the writer of Hebrews wrote chapter 7. He didn't stop him from doing that. Again, that tells me that that wasn't the *purpose* of Hebrews chapter 7—to give us science. Otherwise, God would have stopped him. It's a very simple thought.

So other than absolute inerrancy, you get something like "full inerrancy." These are Erickson's terms. Full inerrancy also holds that the Bible is completely true.

While the Bible does not primarily aim to give scientific and historical data, such scientific and historical assertions as it makes are fully true.

So that steps back a little bit from the absolutist position. The difference between absolute inerrancy and that view really revolves around history and science. The full inerrancy view basically says, "Something can be correct without being completely precise." Now you (listeners in real life) know that in real life experience, that's okay. Something can be true without being completely precise in detail. Statements that you make to the IRS... They let you round up or round down. "Oh, does the IRS... I don't want to use software! I've got to write it out so I can put all the little decimal things in there and every penny, or they'll think I'm lying. They'll think I'm false. They'll think I'm errant." No, they don't care. It's good enough for them. They still think that your return is true and correct. They don't care about the precision. Well, is the Bible allowed to do stuff like that?
I could just go on and on with real-life things where we accept the difference between being correct and being totally, absolutely, exhaustively precise. Is the Bible allowed to be the one and not the other? I say it is. Some people don't. Some people just have to have everything nailed down.

Another view: "limited inerrancy." The Bible is inerrant in its doctrinal teachings, but when it comes to science and nature and the way it does history, the Bible reflects the knowledge of its own day and circumstances. Another view is "inerrancy of purpose." This holds that the Bible faithfully accomplishes its purpose, which is to bring people to Christ. The purpose is valued over propositional truth. The purpose of the Bible is to encounter Christ and it's a means to that end. These are all positions—I just gave you four—that real believers with a high view of Scripture have held historically within the believing community. None of these are liberal views; they are all views held by people who believe Christ is the only way of salvation. They're believers and say this is God's word. They're trying to articulate different perspectives of this. Again, that's just the way it is.

Now, I'm something of a blend of three of these. I'm different because some of what these other views like the inerrancy of purpose view or the limited inerrancy view... Some of the things those things would call "errors," I don't call errors. My belief is you can't consider an author errant when that author writes something and that something is consistent with his purpose, even though it isn't consistent with the way *we'd* say it or the way we'd do something. I don't think we can call those things "mistakes." They *aren't* mistakes. He didn't make a mistake. They are entirely faithful statements in terms of who that person was. And God picked them! So I'm going to honor God's choice and say that if God chose that person knowing that person had X, Y, Z scientific thought (that wasn't really science because God knows better and he knew that we would know better 3,000 years later)… if God didn't care, I don't either. Why would I look at the product—the Bible—and say, "Its purpose is to give us science and so even if we know it makes a statement here that isn't scientific, we have to pretend it is because

that's the Bible's purpose." No, it's not! Otherwise God would have stepped in and chosen somebody else or had the Bible written today or given that person advanced knowledge—something like that. God wouldn't have allowed it. But he did. And that tells me that wasn't God's point. So if I believe that, I'm not looking at these things and saying, "Oh, he made a boo-boo! You made a mistake! Errant! Errant! Errant!" Some people will. I get that. I have friends that take that view. Fine, whatever. But other people will not, for the reasons that we're talking about here.

45:00 This is actually a really difficult subject. I've spent a lot of time on this. Sorry that it's gotten a little bit long here. But it really comes down to what counts as an error. Everybody gets to define and answer that question for themselves, and that's just the way it is. Is the Bible allowed to use approximations? Must it have exhaustive precision? Must it always be understood literally? Is it allowed to use phenomenological language? "The sun rose." Well, we know the sun doesn't rise. "He's errant! That's an error, a mistake!" Well, we use that phrase all the time. Everybody knows what it means. Next time your neighbor says, "Hey, what a beautiful sunrise today!" what are you going to do? Say, "You're errant! You're a liar!" No, you're not going to do that. That's absurd. Well, then why would you do it to the Bible? The Bible isn't trying to make a scientific statement in that place where it talks about the sun rising. Must the Bible be exhaustive? Must it say everything there is to be said about a given subject? Is the Bible allowed to use literary genres that people used? "If people used them, then they're not of God... how can we call this the Word of God when there are human genres in there?" Again, this discussion can very quickly become absurd. Frankly, if you've ever been in a discussion about this, you know that. It can very quickly just become a caricature of itself.

I'll just throw this last thought out: if the Bible wasn't written with our questions in mind—with the way we would do things as the focus and the way we would say things as the focus—then why should we judge it as though it were supposed to do that? Why must it be more than what it was and what it is? I'm in favor of just letting it be what it is under the Providence of God.

So back to the question. I don't think we have a situation here where we have this approach where, "Well, if I can find something in the Bible that isn't expressed the way we would express it now, I've got to throw the whole thing out." That's absurd. You wouldn't do that to anything else in life. And if you say you would, you're lying. You just wouldn't do that. And so my question, again, to folks (and I'm not saying the questioner is doing this, I'm just making a generalization here)... When you get into this situation, that's an honest question. It's an honest thing to bring up. You just wouldn't do this to anything else in life. You know that things have a context and a purpose and you judge them accordingly. And it's okay! So why can't we do that with Scripture? That's all I'm asking. Why not? Unfortunately, the reason why people just sort of can't do that is because they have been taught a superficial paranormal-like view of the Bible.

And then when enemies of the Bible threaten it on the basis of that understanding, people are disturbed because the reality of Scripture doesn't conform to this image of it that has been transmitted—and it's been transmitted by people who don't spend time in the text and don't encounter these things. They just parrot the definitions from one person to the next—one generation to the next, one church to the next. I'm just asking people to spend some time thinking about it. It's an important question, but I'm going to be so audacious to say that it's really not *that* impossible to think well about this and come out with a position that is workable. We're not omniscient. How are we going to know what falls in which category? We're not because we're not omniscient. But it's workable and it honors both sides—the human side and the Providential side.

TS: And our time's up! (laughter)

MH: I'm sorry. Everything else is a one-sentence answer.

TS: Okay, MC's question is regarding Daniel 8:13.

The New American Standard Bible has it, "Then I heard a holy one speaking and another said to that particular one who was speaking." I'm wondering about the original language behind "that particular one who was speaking." Some say that the word used was Hebrew and was translated as "certain" or "particular." Some others say that, although the language is Hebrew, some of the words are Babylonian (and that is the case here where that word is Babylonian) and this is actually a proper name and should be translated as "Wondrous Numberer of Secrets."

MH: There's really nothing special about the term here. If people want to go to Daniel 8:13 in the ESV it's, "Then I heard a holy one speaking and another holy one said to the one who spoke" and that would correspond to the "particular one" in the NASB. The term underneath the English that gets that rendering (either "particular one" or "the one who spoke") is *palmoni* (that's the lemma). It's known. It's a Hebrew term. It's not something that has to brought over from Akkadian. Obviously, Akkadian or Babylonian will have an equivalent because the languages are related, but the term in and of itself basically just means "something different" or "something that isn't the same as this other thing." And so a translation like NASB has "this particular" angel and that's a good translation because it's focusing on one and not the other. This is a term of distinguishing. Now, for those who have a tool like HALOT (Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament) or Koehler/Baumgartner or something like that, there is a note in that entry for the lemma in those sources that has a question mark on it (the editors are not certain). They'll note that the term *pe-lamed-he* (three Hebrew letters) might be related to *pe-lamed-aleph*. Linguistically, I can just tell you without going into the details that this is possible. *Aleph* and *he*... There is some interchangeability between languages with those letters. That's important because *he-lamed-aleph* does have this idea of "something wondrous." The

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problem, though is that in *palmoni*, the first three consonants are *pe-lamed-mem*. It's not *pe-lamed-aleph* in any one of these situations—either here in Daniel 8:13 or elsewhere that it's used. But you do have some sort of relationship linguistically that exists and there is an interchangeability there also in Babylonian so that *pe-lamed-aleph* (*pele* would be the noun)—that's a term that means "wondrous things," like in Isaiah 9, what is typically translated as "Wonderful Counselor." Literally in Hebrew, that's "doer of wonders" and that kind of thing: *pele, pe-lamed-aleph*. But again, that is not specifically the term in Daniel 13. And I think, more importantly, this is not a proper name. It is not a proper noun. It is just a normal noun. So to say that this word here in Daniel 8:13 is a proper name that should be translated "Wondrous Numberer of Secrets"... That's just bogus. But you should know that there is a conceptual link between—catch what I'm saying here—"something different" and then "something wondrous." Because wondrous things aren't normal things. So there's sort of a conceptual link between the two ideas, but we do not have a proper name here as somebody who should be called "Wondrous Numberer of Secrets."

TS: Mark was wondering:

Does Michael believe Psalm 82 is a future event or that it occurred already?

MH: I would say that Psalm 82 is part of the "already but not yet" paradigm. I think verse 8, "Arise, O God, judge the earth for you shall inherit all the nations"… We spent a whole episode on this (episode 95), on the resurrection and the death of the gods and how the Septuagint has resurrection language in here associated with the re-inheritance of the nations—which, by definition, means the defeat of the gods. That's all linked to the resurrection of Christ and the events of post-resurrection onward. So there's an "already" element there in verse 8, but there's also a "not yet" element in verse 7 that speaks of the ultimate destruction of the gods: "Nevertheless, like men you shall die and fall like any prince." There's going to be an end-point to their very existence, as opposed to their authority (verse 8). I don't think it's either. I think it's both. The already-but-not-yet idea.

TS: Okay, Gail has three questions here. The first one is:

Is there anything in Second Temple or Intertestamental Period that gives us insights of whether there are levels in hell? Does Mike Heiser have any insights in this? It is hard to understand how a relatively moral person who never turned to Christ could suffer the same penalty as Hitler, Stalin, Judas, etc.

MH: Well, on the one hand, the idea of degrees of punishment, I think *is* a Scriptural one, but that doesn't depend on levels in hell. If you actually go into Second Temple literature, there are a wide range of nouns or adjectives (and/or

both) that describe this place that is the polar opposite of where God lives (up in the heavens). The heavenly language is very well-known in Second Temple literature to have lots of different levels. Any number of pseudepigraphal texts go into that. You really don't get the same thing with the opposite place—with the bad place. They all sort of overlap—the Abyss, Hades, Gehenna, that sort of thing. They all point to a specific place, and not necessarily *levels*. Now, there are some passages where it makes you wonder if there are like different rooms or neighborhoods, where one set of bad guys lives here and another set of bad guys lives there. There are some places where you could read certain texts that way. But that doesn't specifically speak of levels. You really only get level-terminology (and even here it's not that much), but in rabbinic literature you'll get certain passages that talk about levels. It's kind of an incidental issue because if you go to passages like Matthew 10:15 where Jesus says, "Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town" (a town that doesn't accept his disciples). A passage like that tells you, I think, pretty plainly that there are degrees of punishment. Now, whether that corresponds with levels, we're not really told. But at the very least, that statement by Jesus suggests pretty clearly that not everybody is sort of viewed on the same level of wickedness—that there are certain acts, certain things... Rejecting him is, of course, a big deal—his teachings. That's why Jesus says this. So there is a differentiation made in certain passages of the New Testament that convey this idea, but you don't actually have a level/hierarchical description to go with it.

TS: Gail also wants to know:

Is there would be any reason to think that those on the divine council are female, or is that role reserved for males?

MH: No, there's no reason to think it's reserved for males. You have the "sonship" language in the Old Testament and the language associated with the council metaphor (especially in the Old Testament) sort of is what it is because of Old Testament culture. It's modeled on the patriarchal household idea, where you have sons that get put in certain positions and so on and so forth. Whereas, the daughters were not in decision-making roles within patriarchal culture. What overturns that is a passage like (and this isn't the only one, by any means) Genesis 1:26, where (as I articulate in *Unseen Realm* to a length that I won't go to here) if you have the human family created to be part of the divine family—that this was the original plan and template and prototype. It's very clear that they're created male and female. It says that explicitly. So that is more of a generalized description of the human beings by necessity and by creation—by birthright, so to speak. They are male and female, and yet they were designed/made to be included in this group. So that suggests that this is what we're really talking about. It's not like only males get to be in the council or anything like that. When the council functionally gets talked about, you have this "sonship" language because of the patriarchal household metaphor that is so useful to describing the

family of the patriarch—the leader—and then what his sons do to serve the leader, that kind of thing. So it's a cultural derivative. Genesis 1 and other passages transcend that.

TS: Okay, Gail's last question (and the last question of the episode) is:

In the Naked Bible Podcast #94, Dr. Mike Heiser speaks of the purpose of the Law. My understanding was that the Law was the schoolmaster to lead us to the understanding that we need a savior. Instead, Mike says it was to restrict sin, as he says, "to restrain human evil." Could Mike elaborate on that?

MH: I think Gail is correct. The law was designed to bring us to Christ. What she's talking about (for those who aren't familiar with it) is we did an episode on Galatians 3 and 4, where we talked about how the law was added because of transgressions. We asked the question, "Just whose transgressions are we talking about?" and we talked about the work of Tyler Stewart there. That's in the same passage. Galatians 3 and 4 actually contains both of these ideas. The second idea wasn't really germane to what Stewart was doing, but that doesn't mean it's not there. It is there. So she has a good observation there. I would just say that the law can and does serve more than one purpose. That's the easy way to understand it because you've got both of them in Galatians 3 and 4.

TS: And just like that, Mike, that's it!

MH: Just like that! Well, it wasn't like an instant here. Some of these were pretty involved, but I hope it's time well-spent.

TS: Always. Again, I just want to congratulate the winners of the social media book contest. Maybe, Mike, they'll post a picture of themselves with the book on our Facebook group. I know a couple of them are in there. So maybe they'll do that. That would be cool.

MH: Yeah, that would.

TS: We appreciate you answering our questions, and I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.