

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

Number 46

"Q&A #2"

Dr. Michael S. Heiser

With

**Residential Layman
Trey Stricklin**

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Our second Question and Answer episode!

Here are the papers referenced in the show:

Why use the Septuagint?
ANE Pagan Divination Practices
Belial-Mastema-Satan-Devil-DNTB
LordsDayDLNT

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 46, our second Q&A show. I'm your residential layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing this week?

MSH: Very good. It's good to be back?

TS: Well good. So we got some exciting news. Your Go-Fund project for the Divine Council has hit its goal.

MSH: Yeah, that was pretty impressive. I mean I posted that and I thought, well, if I can get the funding, we we're asking for \$4500. I figured 300-350 hours work. I was like, well if we can get this by maybe October, something like that, then that gives someone working part time a couple months to get it done by the end of the year. I had no idea.

TS: It was a week or ten days.

MSH: Yeah, it was ten days. It was like 70 people in 10 days, and there was the \$4500. It was almost, I was going to say, it was just like magic, but we don't do magic here. We do province here, so yeah, the response was sort of overwhelming. I just had no idea anything like that would be what would turn out. So I'm real happy, just thankful, thankful everybody who'd donated something and we can finally get this thing to the finish line.

TS: So, I think, maybe building this community and doing things like that is just a testament that church really is everywhere.

MSH: Yeah, it's encouraging to me because I have a list of these sort a putter projects, oh, wouldn't it be nice if I could get this or that done. And I'd love to hire people who are capable to do these things. A lot of the things I'll have some input in but they're really preparatory to something else I want to do. It's just a logistic it sort of issue. It's just fun to have people participate. I just like that. But I had no idea that it would just be that quick, that the response would be what it was.

TS: Well that's great, good news. Well, alright, for this show, I just want to again thank everybody. We appreciate you sending in all your questions. We certainly got a large sample of questions this week. I think would have roughly around 10 this week and we still got more coming in. So if we don't get to your question, I'm saving them, so we'll get to them for the next one. But why don't we just go ahead and start with these questions. First question is from Sean and he's asking, in 2 Timothy 1:16-18, Paul writes the phrase, 'may the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day.' Seems odd he's saying. He's assuming on that day is referring to the Day of Judgment. Why does Paul, who knows salvation only comes through Christ plead for mercy for this family? If they are believers, why would Paul say this? Believers already have an assurance of mercy.

MSH: Yeah, I think the issue here is what judgment are we actually talking about? The prayer, if you go and look at the passage, Paul's prayer is about *Onesiphorus*, that's a mouthful, your

Greek name. This particular indication, all indications are that he was a believer. Nothing else indicates otherwise. I would agree with Sean asking the question, seems like this guy is a Christian, is a believer. I think, though, again, the question, what judgment are we talking about, I think Paul's prayer is expressing the hope that this guy would get into heaven. I think it's a prayer that expresses Paul's hope that this man's particular kindness to him, to Paul, will be rewarded by God. That would put sort of the judgment context in something similar to 1 Corinthians 3, when Paul talks about the judgment of believers, I might as well just read it in 1 Corinthians 3:12-13, Paul says,

² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day [MSH: **Again, look at the reference there, the Day, and look at the 2 Timothy passage, we had that Day**] will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

MSH: So Paul is praying that *Onesiphorus*, his work, his goodness, his kindness on behalf of him, on behalf of Paul and, of course, by extension, on behalf of the gospel. Paul's praying that man's efforts will be reciprocated by God, that it'll be something God rewards when believers, when people, who are believers, get rewarded for the things done in this body.

TS: Okay, our second question comes from Tom. He knows you dealt with the Hebrew roots movement a bit and he would like your take on the Sabbath at some point, and, specifically, how are Christians supposed to observe it?

MSH: Yeah, this actually, I think it's pretty easy to tell that this question sort of gets into also the issue of is Sunday the Sabbath, what the whole Lord's Day question. I think it's safe to assume both from the New Testament and also the early church history that you did have Christians keeping Sabbath throughout the early church period and the apostolic period, and of course beyond that. Jesus kept the Sabbath, so that wouldn't be anything unusual. Easter in the early church was observed on an annual basis, in connection with Passover, so there you have, again, another Israelite Jewish holy day. So this sort of mixture is not a surprise in any regard. We have Paul talking the Corinthians about laying up money on the first day of the week. The traditional approach to that passage sort of assumes that, why would Paul mention the first day of the week unless it was some sort of formal gathering, a special occasion. But, again, Paul never actually comes out and says that there's no command to meet on the first day the week. It's just something the New Testament that you more or less observe. We read it and we see, oh, the first day of the week, that's the day the Lord rose, people were getting together. But there's no actual command that replaces the Sabbath with this day or does anything vice versa. You don't get anything that formal. So just in a general sense, the evidence for or against, both really, a weekly remembering of the resurrection in the apostolic age or saying that this is the new Sabbath so we must meet, we must do a particular thing on this day, the evidence for a sanctioned official mandatory meeting, whether it was thought of as the Sabbath or as the Lord's day, is very ambiguous with respect to Scripture. Again, you see it happening but there's no formal

command. Now that plays into this whole question about observing the Sabbath, what should Christians do? There's no requirement of Sabbath just like there was no requirement of a Sunday Lords Day meeting. Both of them happened. You look at a passage like Acts 2:46. Again, we passed over this but if you go to Acts 2:46, it's, again, something that's easily missed. It says,

⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

MSH: So they were actually doing both. Early believers were doing things at the temple and they were meeting house to house, and in certain contexts, we see the meeting on the Lord's Day as well. But there's no formalization of any of it. And so to argue any one of these positions that we must observe Sabbath as Christians, well, why? There's no command. Or we must look at Sunday as the new Sabbath, why? There's no command to do that, to meet. If that exchange had taken place, then it would be logical that we would see a direct command about that day and no others, and certainly cutting the temple off as well. But, again, it's just sort of this thing that is reported on but nothing sort of laid down. Now in three passages, Paul does say some pretty specific things that sort of relegate the Sabbath to the time or the era or the context of the law, the law of Moses, and sort of moves it from the law of Moses to, in Greek, the *Adiaphora*, those are matters of indifference, disputable matters, things that you can do. You could pick one or the other, six of one, half dozen of the other. Like in the Romans 14 when Paul talks about doubtful disputation which refers back to 1 Corinthians, chapter 8 specifically and that chapter's about the meat sacrificed to idols. But these are things that you could go either way on, and you need to, again, treat each other well regardless of what decision you make. So these three passages where Paul sort of takes this thing that was intrinsic to the law and the era of the law, really the focus on ethnic national Israel as the people of God, but now we're dealing with the circumcision neutral thing we call the church. And so, it's not the same level of importance or at least in terms of the calendar, the ritual events, if we could use that phrase, in the life nearly church. The three passages are Galatians 4:8-11. In the context of that passage, Paul I think is pretty clear that Sabbath observance is not to be imposed on a believer in the name of law keeping is though it merits any status before God. And it's also not to be sort of observed as a perspective promise of any reward eventually, or any further standing in the gospel or in our relationship with the Lord. Again, it's relegated to something that, you can do it or not do it. He doesn't say don't do it either, but he doesn't command the Sabbath be observed. Romans 14:5-6, here we are. I just mentioned Romans 14 maybe a minute ago. Paul, again, comments very briefly on the Sabbath issue, but he makes it evident that observing specific days like the Sabbath and the Lord's Day, again, we're throwing the Sunday in with this. These are matters of conscience. They're not legal or moral or spiritual or theological obligations. Romans 14 is all about that sort of stuff when we find the Sabbath mentioned in there. Third passage of the Colossians 2:16. Again, Paul I think is pretty clear that it's not a condition of spirituality. It's not inappropriate. You can do it or not do it, observe some different day. This applies equally to Sabbath and the elevation of Sunday. So I think it sort of cuts both ways. All that sort of boils down to this, that it's really difficult to find any specific exegetical evidence that any of this was commanded in the New Testament. And I think there's a reason for that. I think the reason is actually the fourth chapter of Hebrews. If you look at Hebrews 4:8-13, here's what it says. The writer of Hebrews says,

⁸ For if Joshua had given them [**MSH: Again, them being the people of God in the Old Testament, the Israelites**] rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. ⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

MSH: Now that's a linking of the Sabbath idea with salvation by grace through faith which we know was offered to everyone, not just Israelites. So, again, I'm going to say it again. It links the Sabbath language to this circumcision neutral thing we call the church, and it's also putting out into the future. Let me just read it real quickly again.

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. ⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. [**MSH: which in the context is unbelief**]

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

MSH: The whole notion here is that we are in God's rest because we're saved by faith and not of works. There's no merit or anything like that. But even though that's true, we're still looking forward to sort of the ultimate rest, the time to be with the Lord and all that sort of thing. And the book of Hebrews, it does this a lot. It compares the new context, this circumcision neutral thing we call the church, to the Old Testament, the one singular national ethnic Israel people of God and says that what's here now is superior to that because Jesus is superior. But yet, again, this is your already status, but there's a not yet status as well. There's something coming down the road, sort of an ultimate consummation of this relationship you now have with God through Christ. And in the Sabbath here from Hebrews 4 is part of that. So it's not an observance of a week to week day. It's a resting in salvation by grace through faith and looking forward to the ultimate rest when we're on the new heaven and new earth, the global Eden, and that's what we want to attain to, and the whole idea of attaining refers to holding on to your faith, not slipping away due to unbelief, like the Israelites did, the examples he actually gives in that chapter, and in chapter 6 and a few other chapters of Hebrews. I think this is why you have this ambiguity in the New Testament about should we observe the Sabbath. It's sort of a liberty issue, a conscience issue, and it is that because of the gospel creating a new people of God that's circumcision neutral, and also because the rest of God is something now eschatological, that you're resting in your relationship with God now. And in the future, we will get this rest. We'll be where God is in the ultimate sense, a restored Eden.

TS: Okay, our next question is from Robert. And his question is when looking at today's church, in light of the market-driven church phenomenon, can we say that God's people are just content

with not dispersing, going into the world to reclaim the nations? Can we compare how church folks are today with the disobedient people at the Tower of Babel?

MSH: Well, I think a lot of what's behind that question is really more applicable to the American church than the global church. Every week we tend to have an insular view because this is where we live and what we see going on in the name of Christianity in our own context and sub-contexts. And yeah, we can look at the American church and say it's worldly, say it's not doing what really should for the advance of the gospel. Again, a lot of that is very insular. We can't possibly be aware of all the efforts that are occurring out there to spread the gospel and there are a lot of them. But when we only expand our vision beyond the sort of consumeristic American church or even the civilized Western church, we could broaden it that much, when you go to the Third World, when you go to the underground church in China, they're doing the job. They are doing the job there, and we ought not to presume because we can't see that. That's not our context, it's not happening. So people who know me have heard me and read the blog, things like that, they know that I have bones to pick with the American church. I do think it's worldly, but at the same time a lot of what that church is supposed to do is still getting done, largely through believers, individual believers just getting off their butts and doing stuff, and also the parachurch activities, parachurch industries. It doesn't take very long if you're trolling the Internet for this kind of thing, that people are just saying look, my local body is just, they're serving up pabulum on a weekly basis. People aren't learning anything and they're not being challenged about the way they live. They're not being really being challenged about speaking up for the Lord, either in terms the gospel or just defending the character of God, the faith, or whatever it is. And so people go out to the web and they find ways to do that, or they take it upon themselves to just, I'm going to do this. Those of you have read the Portent, this is a subtext to that novel. I don't want to go too far off into it but essentially, there's some characters that have some conversations just like this. We just got tired of playing church. We get tired of waiting for the church do X and we just decided to do stuff. We decided to do what needed to be done, that's the end of the story. So that is happening. It may not look organized. It may not be as detectable on weekly basis as you'd like it to be because you'd like to see vibrancy in a local church context, and often what we see through the mass media about Christians is either the silliness or the worldliness that goes on in the church and not the other stuff. So I'm not going to deny what the problem is. But I think we can be a little more optimistic too. So I think the analogy works a little bit. I don't think it's as severe of a situation as it was in Babel. But I think that the point, there's something to the point here.

TS: Okay, Robert's got another question and then Greg echo's the question, so I'm going to ask them both at the same time. Robert asks why is Satan the head demon in charge? What does he offer that compels others to follow him? Does the book of Enoch or any of the books speak of him? And then Greg, same thing. In podcast 43, you mentioned Satan is Lord of the dead. In your view, how did he come to occupy this position and how does he exercise authority over a person once they die, assuming they do not belong to Christ?

MSH: First of all, Satan is not a demon. He's never called a demon in Scripture. He's certainly a divine being. Before his rebellion, he's referred to as the anointed cherub, which, again, is a term that's used for a throne guardian, so he was a divine being that had access to God, God's throne,

throne guardian, that was his role in the unseen hierarchy of the unseen realm. So, again, basically Satan is a divine being in rebellion. Demons are something different, both by second Temple intertestamental Jewish tradition and also I think, to cut that down to something decipherable here, manageable in the context of our Q&A, second Temple Jewish literature overwhelmingly has the origin of demons as being a demon is the departed, the disembodied spirit of a Nephilim. It's just that simple. And it's consistent in all sorts of texts from that period. You get hints of that in the Old Testament when you have Sheol, the realm of the dead, occupied by the Rephaim, because the Rephaim, at least in biblical literature, were one of the giant clans, one of the terms used of the giant clans in the Old Testament. So those guys get killed and go to Sheol. And it's not good to see them. They're threatening in the biblical text, in the few passages that the Rephaim show up. It's sinister; it has a scary feel to it. So there are connections to this more developed idea that you have very transparently and it's discussed a lot in the second Temple period about what demons are. Well Satan isn't any of those. He wasn't a Nephilim. He wasn't embodied then got killed. He's not in the picture at all. We're talking about a divine being in rebellion, so that's the first thing. I think why he sort of assigned primacy is because, number one, he was the first rebel, the first one who opposed God. And so he has, to sound a little silly, he has street cred with everybody else. He's the first one that transgresses and does his own thing. And secondly, I think what he did, his deception, resulted in humanity losing eternal life. Before the fall, humans had what I would call contingent immortality, that is, they were going to live forever as long as they did or didn't do certain things. Well, I think the tree of life, it's a metaphor of the fact that as long as they're in the presence of God and they don't violate the presence of God, get kicked out, they're going to live forever. But, again, in terms of life in Eden, they couldn't just, if an elephant fell over, tripped and fell over on Adam and crushed him, he's going to die. If they do something stupid, injure themselves, they are going to die. They're humans, they bleed, they need air to breathe. You have to eat to live. So immortality before the fall was contingent on certain things. But when the fall occurs, all of that's gone. You're no longer in the presence of God. You will now die because now you are not in the presence of life, which is the presence of God. You are driven out of Eden. You're on your own now. You will begin to age and eventually, you will die. And since every person dies, they are essentially owned by the Lord of the dead. Everyone goes to that place that he is now in dominion over because of his judgment. He's a throne guardian cherub. He is cast out of the presence of God. He's cast down to Earth. Hebrew word is *erets*. It's also one of the words used in the Hebrew Bible for the underworld. That's why there's this connection between earth and under the earth, and the afterlife, at least the negative afterlife place. There are conceptual reasons why these ideas are connected. I'm not saying that hell or the afterlife has latitude and longitude. It doesn't but it's the place that God isn't. The Earth is the place that God isn't, especially after the fall. Before the fall, he was there. After the fall, he's not. And the rest the biblical stories about God reclaiming the Earth, reinstalling his kingdom, getting a foothold on the Earth and spreading the good rule of God's presence all over the planet. But on its own, it's not where God is. It's the realm of temporary-ness, the realm of death, and it's this place where Satan is cast down. So he's the Lord of the dead. He was the first rebel and he basically has ownership of every human being because every human being will die, again, accepting excepting the Lord's return in our context and that sort of thing. So the solution to that is that you have to have membership in the other kingdom, in the kingdom of God, which we now call the body of Christ. You have to be united to Christ, have to be a believer through embracing the gospel by faith. Satan no longer has any

claim over you by definition. You no longer belong to him because you will be raised, because Christ is raised, and you will be with the Lord forever. So if you're not in God's kingdom, if you're not a believer, Satan still has legal claim, ownership, of that person. So once they die, that's where they're going to stay. They're going to stay separated from God. They will not be in the presence of God. That's sort of a convoluted way of addressing a number things all in the same sort of shot. But I think that's why Satan gets this primacy, because of what results from his initial rebellion. And in one sense, he owns the Earth because he owns everybody on it, because everybody dies, and the only way to preempt that or circumvent it, to get out of the situation is through the gospel to the kingdom of God. Now, I think he said something about if there's information on Enoch and other books, I've given Trey an essay from a reference source on second Temple period texts that deal with Satan, the devil, and there's a number of titles, Mastema, Belial, that sort of thing. And I'm sure Trey will post that essay with this episode so you can go read that.

TS: Absolutely. I'll have that up on the website when the show is live. And also, Greg has a follow-up question to that, and that's about the intermediate state. Where does the believer who has died reside until the return of Christ?

MSH: The short answer is he resides in the afterlife. In other words, in the afterlife is the spiritual realm. Now, that realm doesn't have literal latitude and longitude. All afterlife terms, whether they're in the Bible or the ones we use, they sound geographical. We talk about people passing over, going to the other side, we use these physical terms, these physical descriptors, these geographical descriptors because the way we talk requires a sense of place, requires physical location because we're embodied. That's all we can relate to, place and location. But all the terms are metaphors for passing from our realm, the realm of the embodied, the human realm to the divine realm, the supernatural realm, the unseen realm, the spiritual realm, whatever you want to call it. And over in that realm, we still have more place location terms. We talk about heaven. We talk about hell; heaven being the place that's associated in the spiritual realm with the presence of God, hell being a place that is certainly not the presence of God. So we even use geographical terminology to talk about the disembodied spiritual world. We just have to do that because that's all we can really process and understand. The idea is that the afterlife includes both reward in the presence of God for believers who believed in what God asked them to believe and it also includes separation from God's presence for those who have not believed what God says they need to believe. So that's how I would approach that question. Where does the believer who's died reside until the return of Christ? I think Paul's clear to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. We go to the afterlife in the spiritual realm and we are with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:6-8, I might as well read it. We have here,

⁶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

MSH: So there he contrasts being embodied in our natural realm as opposed to being in the realm where God is, the realm of the disembodied, the afterlife, and specifically the subset of the afterlife, the place where God's presence is. But the intermediate state, I think we call it intermediate, at least my experience in reading theology and teaching theology, we use this as sort of a term that is a precursor to the new heaven and new earth. I would just say this. What you experience after death as a believer, when you are with the Lord, is just as real as what you will experience after we have the new heaven and earth, a globalized Eden, because that's where God's presence will be as well. One is not more real than the other. Again, we sort of think of this pre-state as something lesser than the ultimate kingdom. And that's natural for us to do because we can't really understand what life is like disembodied, whereas we can, when we talk about the global Eden, the new heaven and new earth. To me, they're 6 1/2 and half a dozen of the other because they're both Israel. They're both where God is. Yes there's a difference because we are re-embodied in glorified bodies for that existence. And even if you look at the afterlife descriptions in the New Testament prior to of course the ultimate consummation of the kingdom of the new heaven and new earth, there's still embodiment language used. When Peter, James, and John see Moses and Elijah, well, they got to be looking at something. They're not looking at air. So there's still this sense that even though we have this other realm, this afterlife realm where Moses and Elijah are, God makes them discernible in that scene. When people have visions, prophets have visions of the spiritual realm, they're still looking at embodied people, like angels or believers or whatever. Again, that is a concession I think both to the reader and the writer. But I think also it's a concession that God makes for people to help people process the fact that when you die and you're disembodied, you're still you, and you will be able to recognize other people and believers. You will be able to recognize the Lord. You'll be able to recognize Moses and Elijah. Again, we're not told exactly how that works, but all of these states of being, what I think people need to takeaway is they are all just as real collectively and individually. There's not one that's better than the other, that kind of thing. Like I'm in the holding tank here and I'll wait for what's really good. You're not going to be thinking that in the presence of God.

TS: Okay, our next question is from Daniel. Many have preached about 'my God my God, why have you forsaken me.' His question is, why don't we hear more about the relationship between this cry and Psalm 22?

MSH: Boy, this is actually a very aggregated question. When we say why don't we hear about this relationship, I'm not actually sure who the 'we' is in that question. So Daniel might actually wind up after I go through this or at least my thoughts, he might end up re-asking this. I've read plenty about the relationship of this cry in Psalm 22. Lots of people have written things about it. I've heard sermons on it so I'm not really sure what the specific disconnect is? I know there's a difference of opinion on what the cry means. Some people take it like it's, I think most people take it sort of as a cry of despair. Some people do try to argue that it's some sort of victory cry. To me, the victory cry, it is finished, why have you forsaken me, my God my God, why have you forsaken me sounds like despair. But, again, that's just me and I'm hardly alone there. I think some commentators have tried to soften it by saying, well, it's actually a positive thing because Jesus is thinking about the whole Psalm, and if you go back and read the whole Psalm 22, not just his line about being forsaken, you go back and read the whole Psalm, it's a victory thing. I discussed this in the Unseen Realm. That's true, but since we only have this snippet that Jesus

utters, I don't know that we can make this argument, that Jesus has the whole thing in mind. If he did, it is certainly not conveyed very well in the Gospels because just on the surface to the reader, I don't know if they'd be able to really bring along all the baggage. But I'm not willing to say they couldn't do that. I'm just saying I'd need a little bit more evidence that that's a positive cry rather than something in despair. You have the whole issue too, might as well throw this in. Some of the bystanders who are there mistook the first words, what Jesus is saying. Eloi, Eloi, in Greek, Eli, Eli, my God, my God. Some of them heard that and thought that Jesus was crying out for Elijah. The New Testament records that some of them thought that. They say he's calling Elijah. And you'd ask, well, why would he do that? There was a strong tradition that Elijah was going to come back before the final day of the Lord, the final time of judgment. You get that a little bit from Malachi chapter 3:1 and 4:5. You get some second Temple books, the book of Sirach in chapter 48:9-10 talk about the return of Elijah. Mark's writes a little bit about this in Chapter 6; Chapter 8 a little bit about this whole Elijah coming back. Elijah was regarded in the context of the day, in the literature the day, the thinking of the day, they have some sort of deliverer of people in trouble. So when they hear this, and, again, they're not parsing it correctly, because Jesus is referencing Psalm 22, so some of the hearers are associating what they hear with Elijah. Again, that isn't something we should take as theologically astute. It's just an observation that they make, that the gospel writers mention. So, I don't know any of that hints on what Daniel was asking because the disconnect for me is who are the 'we' in that. I think maybe the issue is a positive or negative, but if not, he can always rephrase the question.

TS: A little bit more to that, it says he thinks it appears less of a cry of despair but more of a name dropping reference that implies victory, especially given the reactions by the Jews after the words were uttered.

MSH: I think you get the positive. This issue, Psalm 22, it is ultimately related, as well, to Psalm 68, Ephesians 4. Again, the crucifixion event as a conquest, that is certainly true in New Testament theology. You do have comments, especially in the epistles, referencing back to the crucifixion and even to Jesus on the cross as a warrior, a victorious warrior, the divine warrior and the cross event being a victory because it was. It's the linchpin idea for the whole plan of God to work. But I think that the question still remains that when Jesus was hanging on the cross and utters this particular line, if the writer, if Jesus, or whoever, however we want to parse this, you're either thinking about Jesus or about whose actually recording or writing the gospel, if they want us to pick up on the positive part of that, for me to be convinced of that, I would need to have a little bit more of the Psalm quoted. Again, some of the positive elements, but for certain, when you get to the epistles, that's there. It's a victory thing in the epistles. I don't really see it that clearly here back in the gospel statement itself. And I'm not saying that Jesus didn't know what was going on or he couldn't figure this out or what. But he's a human being. He's just basically been torn apart and it hurts, okay? This is not a pleasant thing by any stretch of imagination. He is embodied. He's human. He's going to die. He's dying and it's an awful thing. So I don't think we should look at the statement presuming it is a cry of despair as anything inordinate because he's legitimately man. Just as legitimately as Jesus is God, he is legitimately man. You need both of them theologically. So I don't see anything amiss with the cry of despair.

TS: Next question from Anthony. In Deuteronomy 33:2, some Bible translations mention a fiery law within the translation. Others translate the Hebrew differently. Mike, can you breakdown the proper Hebrew translation of what the fiery law is?

MSH: Yeah, this is something that does not translate well to audio. It can really only be answered text critically and really you need visual, at least a visual layout here to follow any of this discussion. I actually covered this question in a blog post on the logos academic blog and it's entitled 'why use the Septuagint,' and I've given Trey the link to that essay. So if you're interested, and Anthony obviously is because it's his question, but anybody else who would like the answer to that, the link will be on this episode. You can go up and read what my answer would be.

TS: Okay, so the next three questions are all from Chris. The first one is, he's read plenty of commentary on both the real commentary and Internet mumbo-jumbo. In 2 Peter, Galatians, Colossians, Hebrews, he, when talking about the elements and such, are the authors referring to what we call the classical elements, fire, air, water, and earth and the spiritual entities that rule these elements? Are they talking about the four classical elements and the so-called gnomes, salamanders, and things like that?

MSH: This is about the term *stoicheia* because that's what gets translated elements or elemental things, elemental spirits, again, depending on the context. So this will take a little bit to unpack, and I have a good bit of discussion of this in the Unseen Realm so I'll try to summarize what's there. But the word *stoicheia*, again, that gets this translation elements or elemental spirits or elements of the world, that Greek word refers broadly, it could be used several ways. It refers broadly to the basic elements of the physical world as understood by ancient Greek thinkers and it this is a prescientific worldview, very obviously, earth, wind, and fire, and water. So since they considered earth, wind, fire, and water to be the basic building blocks, the basic elements that all of the material world was made of, that's why they would use this term, *stoicheia*, these basic elements of reality, of our material world. I've never seen it associated with gnomes or anything like that, so I'm basically going to say I don't see any evidence for that unless in later cultures those things are associated with elemental spirits and whatnot. I guess by extension, you can make that connection, but in the New Testament, we don't. That's not in view, at least as I understand some of those other terms. But this is a prescientific culture. They don't know things like atoms and electrons and protons and neutrons. So we shouldn't get our science from this. We shouldn't be thinking, throw all that physic stuff out. Everything is made of these four things because, hey, the New Testament uses this word. Again, that would just be wrongheaded from the get go. Secondly, *stoicheia* is also used of the sun, moon, stars, so celestial objects. Typical ancient belief mostly really, this is a sort of a pagan belief, Paul's going to say certain things that take shots at what I describe here. But the typical pagan belief was that's the celestial bodies, those bodies controlled individual fate of men and women, in essence, what we would think of today as astrology. Biblical theology rejects that idea but does use the term *stoicheia* to refer to the elements of the physical world, 2 Peter 3:10-12 I think would refer to that, whatever they are. But it's not like the biblical writers are thinking that those things control individual fate and also it's not like the biblical writer is asserting something that we need to embrace as some sort of sanctified science, that kind of thing. This is just the way people thought. We have to let them be

who they are. Another option, *stoicheia* is also used to talk about the fundamental principles of the Mosaic law, the fundamental truths of something. Hebrews 5:12, that's where you're going to get this sort of usage, might as well read that one. Might not be as familiar, we have here verse 12,

¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God.

MSH: Well, basic principles, there is this term *stoicheia*. So *stoicheia*, we're up to three options now. Elemental components of our earthly reality, physical reality, we can have sun moon stars. We can have now elementary principles of a body of truth, Mosaic law. You can also have *stoicheia* refer to divine beings. Again, in the ancient world, celestial objects were thought to be either divine beings or under the control of divine beings. Now, we actually do think a little like this today when we talk about God being in control of the heavens or God being in control of the weather, when the reality is that those things. how we get weather, is because they're doing what God created them to do, the things that God created are working the way they should work. And that's why we have weather patterns and things like this, and rain and when we don't have rain. We have snow. Things are working the way God set them up. So there is little bit to that, By extension, God is responsible for these things but we still use this kind of language. But let's get back to *stoicheia* here. The New Testament uses the term of divine beings presumably, again, presumably in the thinking of the day tasked with governance over the heavens and celestial objects in some way, or maybe spirits that interact with the natural world in some way. So it does refer to that. I want to pick up that thought a little bit with something Paul says in Galatians because Paul specifically to deny that these things have any power over individual fate. But I want to say one other thing. There's really no consensus among scholars on Paul's use of the term in certain passages. It's not a term that's used a huge number of times. Some of the instances are more clear than others. The disputed ones are in Galatians 4 and Colossians 2, and so the question is really among New Testament scholars right now, Hebrews 5:12 is pretty clear, elemental teachings of the oracles of God, that one's easy. 2 Peter 3:10-12 about the heaven and earth being dissolved, again, the *stoicheia*, being dissolved, talks really about the fundamental building blocks of the material world. That one's pretty easy. But the ones in Galatians 4 and Colossians 2 are a little less. So what is Paul actually angling for here? And one of these is going to have some particular importance for my own thinking, the whole Divine Council thing, because in Galatians 4, Paul makes a statement that some have said should be understood as Paul denied the idea that other gods still exists. I, of course, don't believe that. I think Paul understood that they did, understanding God as a disembodied being of the spiritual world. He certainly believes those exist. But let's start with Colossians. Now Colossians 2 and I'm going to read these occurrences here. Colossians 2:8 Paul writes,

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

MSH: Then a few verses later in verse 20 we pick up and Paul's says

²⁰ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations ²¹ “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” ²² (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?

MSH: So right there, because he mentions precepts and teachings, but he's also talking about dying to elemental spirits of the world, there's a debate over whether the elemental spirits, the *stoicheia* of the world here, refers to the law or something like that. Well, the law wasn't for the whole world, and so I think we can rule that out. And he's not talking about dying to earth, wind, and fire, okay? That doesn't work either. So I think the majority of scholars, it's fair to say, would say what Paul's talking about here are divine beings that were sort of perceived to running or ruling over the fate of people because they were thought to control the celestial objects that move time and seasons and really thought like we do, like modern people do, some modern people do with astrology, that what happens up in the heavens actually controls the intimate circumstances of our life. And so I think when you get to Colossians 2, that's probably what Paul's shooting at. And I think in Galatians 4, that's certainly what he's shooting at. We read Galatians 4 and here's the one that sort of, I've had people throw at me and say, well, Paul didn't believe that there were still other gods and all that. You'll hear it when I get to it. We'll start in verse 1 here in chapter 4. Paul's talking about, again, contrasting the law and faith in Christ and whatnot, but he's going to be talking to two audiences, Jews and Gentiles. It's important to think about because he's writing to the Galatians. This is a Gentile church. It's not in Jerusalem or Canaan or Israel. This is Gentile gathering but has Jews in it, so here's what he says, verse 1,

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. ⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

MSH: Now, here's what I think is the key to this. I think the first, we'll say, seven verses, Paul has Jewish Christians in mind, because these are the people who know God. He talks about the law, about the Messiah, God' Son being born under the law. He talks about being under the law. It has Jewish flavor to those verses, but then in verse 8, he says, 'formerly when you did not

know God,' well, a Jew certainly knew who the true God was. So I think at that point, he starts to then pick up on the Gentiles in his audience. Galatians has a dual audience. Now, why is that important? Here's why. I think Paul is contrasting *stoicheia*. He uses *stoicheia* to both audiences, if you caught that. In verse 3 he says, 'you were enslaved the elementary principles the world,' and then in verse 9, he talks about it's insane to want to go back to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world. He uses *stoicheia* to both audiences, and he's using it to contrast the *stoicheia* to salvation in Christ in some way. Now since Paul is speaking to both Jews and Gentiles, he, I would suggest, is using the term in a different way with respect to each audience. *Stoicheia* as law would make little sense to Galatians though it would strike a chord with Jews. Now my view is that in Galatians 4:3, Paul is using *stoicheia* to refer to the law and the religious teaching with a Jewish audience view. And then the audience shifts right around verse 9, verse 8 or 9, something like that, to a Gentile. So in Galatians 4:8, when he shifts to pagans, since the Jews would've known about the true God, the times and seasons of years in verse 10 is not referring to the Jewish calendar, since he transitions to Jews in verse 8. I think that Paul is talking about celestial objects, sun, moon, and stars, that mark days and months and seasons and years, So I think Paul is shooting at this idea that the celestial objects either are deities or are controlled by deities. And so, his Gentile readers would be thinking that what happens up there really matters because the gods, they have control over our lives, and Paul says, look, you were enslaved to these objects in heaven that are not gods. They're just objects, not gods. They're not even controlled by God. Paul's actually taking a shot at this cosmology, and he's saying, look, now that you've been released from this superstition, don't go back to it. Don't worry about the times and the seasons and the days and the months, because if you believe this stuff, if you believe astrology, let's put it that way, then that stuff starts to take a hold of your life because you assign it power. And Paul's saying, look, it doesn't have any power. They aren't gods. And I don't think that Paul should be taken, that statement of Paul should be taken that is aimed at celestial objects in the sky. That cannot be taken to say that Paul doesn't believe his Old Testament, which says that the sons of God, those *elohim*, controlled the nations of the world because Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32, which has that theology. Deuteronomy 32:8-9, this is where it all comes down, the whole Deuteronomy 32 worldview. Deuteronomy 32 is quoted several times in 1 Corinthians 10 and specifically, 1 Corinthians 10:20-21, Paul talks about demons and he's quoting Deuteronomy 32:17, where it says that they didn't worship God. They worshiped gods that they had not known, foreign gods, foreign deities, these foreign deities that control the nations. So Paul believes this. He understands his Old Testament and he believes Old Testament theology. What he's shooting at here in Galatians 4 is this flawed idea that the celestial objects in the heavens are deities to control your life, that control your eternal destiny. He's saying that is bunk. Don't go back to it. So, back to the original question, how do we parse *stoicheia*? Well, lots of different ways. You have basically 4 options. I essentially ran through all the occurrences of the term. So if the question really is focused on, if the question is really asking, does this term always refers to divine beings, the answer is no. Sometimes it refers to elements of the world. Sometimes it refers to elemental principles of the law or some elementary truths or whatever. But sometimes it does. Sometimes it is talking about this belief, these beliefs and divine beings control these things.

TS: Okay, his second question is when, in the end, believers, those who overcome, those who are set over the nations and the eschaton, when believers displace the current spiritual hierarchy,

who are they ruling over? If believers are the rulers and all the bad people, sons of God, angels, etc. are enduring punishment, who are they ruling over?

MSH: Well, I think this language speaks of administration of the global Eden, being set over the nations. We read that and we think, okay, I'm the boss now. Who's underneath me? Who do I get to push around? I'm caricaturing it a little bit. I'm not saying that the questioner's thinking that, but that's the way we sort of parse hierarchical relationships. I think really though other reference is about the administration of the global Eden, and since, we had this in an earlier question, the whole thing about the rewards of the believer, since we can't assume from 1 Corinthians 3 or other passages that all believers get the same rewards, I think there will be hierarchy of administration, We need to not think about this in the sense of who I get to boss around or who's going to set my schedule? Who do I have to turn my timesheet in to? That's not really the way to look at it. There is hierarchy, but there's this cooperative family, it's a family business. We're all family. We're all part of the same family in the new heavens and new earth, the new Eden. It's about this cooperative family relationship to maintain the global Eden. We all have different jobs to do and some jobs will be of the different rank than others. Again, Scripture uses these hierarchical, these administrative terms, and I think we have to sort of keep the big picture in mind. God's original edenic intent was to have his divine and human children living together in Eden, which was his home, and then he tasked his human imagers with multiplying and making the whole world Eden, spreading the good rule of God. Eden wasn't the whole world in the beginning. It was just a little piece of the world, so Adam and Eve were assigned, hey, multiply because you're gonna need help here. Now make the rest of the world Eden. Of course, it all comes apart, but on the other side, when we have that situation, we're going to have a situation where, now, we're with God's disembodied, his original divine family, those who are loyal to him and we ourselves are glorified. We are made like Jesus. 1 John 3, we are going to be made like him. We are partakers of the divine nature. And this whole thing about the human family of God and the nonhuman family of God coming together into one unified family with one unified purpose and that is to enjoy and administer in some way, and we're not really told how that's going to work, but enjoy and administer and maintain the global Eden. Everything is what Eden that was and what God intended it to be. I think there is this subtext of the question, too. I might as well throw this in whether it's a subtext or not. This actually gets into why I don't like the word millennium, because millennium, it just doesn't cut it. f The global Eden is eternal. It's not limited to 1000 years. I don't really like any of the systems. I think all the systems have good things to say at some point and I think they all sort of jump the shark at some point, too. But this whole notion that when we get to this point, there is a hierarchy. It is a global Eden. We're not going to chafe under some boss' that we have. We're not going to get to lord it over other people, that sort of thing. We are to be in the very best sense, in the most complete sense, the best way it can possibly work, living together, working together to enjoy and maintain what God has made for us in his own presence, because he is there, in a global sense, as he was Eden, back at the beginning.

TS: Okay, Chris's final question is, what was Daniel doing that was okay? He was embroiled with the magicians and astrologers etc. What were the Magi, who came to honor Christ, doing that was okay? Is it less about what they were doing but rather whose on the other end, and why they're doing what they're doing?

MSH: I think that observation and Chris's question is correct. This actually goes, I'll try to summarize it, but it gets into a paper I wrote on the Old Testament response to pagan divination. I've given you that. You can post it with the episode. To cut to the chase here, the paper is about the fact that in Deuteronomy, you have this list of forbidden practices, things you're not supposed to do, like communicating with the dead or whatever, that are abominable. But there are a couple of things in that list that Old Testament prophets elsewhere do and they're not punished for it. They're doing their job and so the question arises, well, how do they get away with that? The short answer to that is they get away with it because they are soliciting information from the right source for the right reasons. Namely, they were chosen as a prophet of God and God contacts them and they have these conversations and they see things in a vision, whatever. It is about the source, and it is about the intent, in this case, obedience to the true God. So the true God is the orienting point for both things. He is the source and he is the reason why you do this. You do it because you're obeying what he tells you to do, and the means by which to communicate with him that he assigns to you, that he tells you to use or to do. So people look at the Deuteronomy passage and they think it sort of categorical when it actually isn't. There's a context to it. And the overarching context of this thing generally is a true prophet of God, someone who is getting divine information, information from the other side, from the correct source, is one to quote Jeremiah 23:16 is one who has stood in the Council. The true test of a prophet is have you encountered God in his throne room, in his counsel, to receive your commission to do what you're doing? And we call that, broadly, have you had a divine encounter? Have you been commissioned by the true God? If you have, and God says, hey, you can use the Urim and the Thummim. You can do this or I'm going to communicate with you in a dream or I'm going to give you the ability to interpret a dream or I'm going to give you the ability, okay, in the context here, to discern something I'm doing, some messaging that I'm giving the heavens. Okay, that's okay because it's the correct source and I'm in control of the dispensing of this information. One of the reasons why a lot of stuff was violated like communicating with the dead, which the biblical prophets do not do, there's a little twist on this in 1 Samuel 28 when Samuel is called up by the medium of Endor, that God permits Samuel to have that conversation with Saul, but other than that, you don't have biblical prophets engaging in this this kind of thing. In that case, they are the dead guy. But the reason why of a number these things were forbidden is that you can't have humans initiate this sort of contact with the other side because they don't know what they're getting and they can be misled or destroyed by the information. And so God sets up rules for his people, do's and don't's. Do not do this thing, not because it's a fairytale and not because it doesn't work, the rules are there because it does work and it's dangerous. God gave the Israelites Urim and the Thummim and the ephod, and all these sorts of things. He gave them prophets, people that stood in the Council and were sent to the people. God gave them a variety of means by which they could learn information from him. It was initiated by God. The information is controlled by God. And the information is true and correct because he's God. He's the true God. If you don't have those boundaries, those parameters, it is dangerous. You should not be doing this. You will be misled. I have enemies, God says. There are other gods around here, back to the Deuteronomy 32 worldview, you are surrounded by hostile entities, not just hostile people, but hostile entities. And oh, wouldn't they love to get your ear. There's this sense of protection. These rules are here for your own good.

Now, Daniel is trained in all the wisdom of the wise men. If people do a study of the term wise men, you actually read through Daniel, in Daniel 2 where it says in verse 2,

² Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. **[MSH: Of course they can't do it.]** ¹⁰ The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean.

MSH: Well, the King gets torqued, and he commands that "all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed." So the decree goes out. The wise men were about to be killed. They sought Daniel and his companions. So Daniel and his companions are part of this group. And, in fact, Daniel is actually credited and his companions for being the best among the wise men, the most skilled at doing what the wise men did. We're not told in painful detail specifically what these things were. But you say why is this okay for Daniel? Because the biblical story about Daniel is really clear. Daniel understands that the only God that really has this information, that he's actually going to ask for information, is the God of Israel. So it doesn't really matter what the means or the technique or the little ritual or whatever is. Daniel is not going to direct it to an inferior inept hostile god. He's going to direct what he's doing to the God of Israel. They put their lives on the line. They won't eat the King's food. They're serious about it. They're not going to say, well, I'm not going to eat that and then turn around the next day and say, hey, where's Baal? I can't wait to pray to Ball, or do this ritual for Baal to get information. They're not doing that. They have their theology correct. So we need to see Daniel status and his training in the context of his loyalty to the true God, which is borne out in the rest of the story. As far as astral stuff, let me just make the comments since we've gotten into it in this question and in an earlier question, and in fact, this was part of my subject matter in the interview I just did for a guy on TV, biblical astral prophecy. Why are there zodiac mosaics in in synagogues dated to late antiquity in Jerusalem and Haifa and some of these places? Why do we have zodiac mosaics in a synagogue at all? We'll, it's because of a very simple thing. It goes back to passages like Ezekiel 1, which before places the chair of the cardinal points to the Babylonian zodiac. It's not an accident. It's not a coincidence. It's deliberate. It's theological messaging because back in Ezekiel 1, it's not Marduke that sitting on the throne governing the four points of the zodiac, governing the times and the seasons, the fate of men and women and children. It's not Marduke that's doing any of this. Its Yahweh, the God of Israel, who's actually in control and that's Ezekiel's message. Hey, we're sitting here in Babylon by the river Kvar, and things are going really bad. And it looks really bad, and we're still licking our wounds, and we know that we were jerks, and that's why we're here. God hated that and God sent us to exile, but guess what? Marduke didn't beat Yahweh. Yahweh is still on the throne, and Ezekiel uses Babylonian imagery to make the point. We're sitting here in Babylon. People think that this god is great. Marduke is great. Look what he did to the Israelites and he's in control of everything now. Pardon me, he's not. So the message to the captives is, God is the one who controls the times and the seasons and the course of history and the events that happen here. He is the one in control. Now since Israelites, biblical writers and people who are believers, believe that, hey, doesn't Genesis say God created all this

stuff for times and seasons? Of course it does. So the common belief was, and it was good theology that, look, that stuff going on up there, they're not astronomers. They don't have modern science. They're not doing theoretical physics, and all this kind of stuff. They're looking at the heavens with the notion that we really know who made those and I'm betting that if we really understood how those things moved and what they did, that God can communicate certain thoughts to us about what he intends to do and what he is doing. We have Psalm 19, "the heavens declare the glory of God". The firmament proclaims his handy work. It's not just saying, well, that's a nice artistic picture, because if you look at what the rest of the Psalm says in Psalm 19, it's not that those are neat decorations. Day to day pours out speech. Night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor are there words whose voice is not heard. Their voice, whose voice, whose their, that's the heavens. Their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. Now, the Masoretic text actually reads, their line goes out through all the Earth. It's a reference to the ecliptic. Ecliptic is the imaginary line that the constellations of the zodiac travel. There was the sense, even in the Bible, that you could look at the heavens and possibly, if you were asking the true God for the information or learn what you're doing here, depending on him you're assigning the knowledge to where it needs to be assigned, and your loyalty to the true God is not in question, it's possible that you could learn something up there. That was the belief. Paul quotes Psalm 19, the passage I just read, he quotes verse 4 in Romans 10:18. Anyone remember what Romans 10 is talking about? That's the passage that Paul says, hey, what about hearing about Jesus? how should they hear unless they have a preacher and faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Have they not heard? And Paul says in verse 18, yes, they have heard, and then he quotes Psalm 19:4, their line or their voice goes throughout the whole earth, their words to the end of the world. It's an oblique reference to the idea that somehow the heavens communicated the coming of the King, the coming of Jesus. Now, I personally think that what Paul was thinking about, I can't prove it, to be up front and say I can't prove what Paul was thinking about this, but I have a suspicion, that what Paul was thinking there is what we read in Revelation 12, the astral signage of the birth of the Messiah. I can't prove it. It's my suspicion. He's thinking something because he quotes the verse, and Paul's a good guy. He is a faithful believer. He's not a heretic. He's not like iffy. It's Paul, he wrote half the New Testament. So there's this sense that again if God chooses to communicate to people by this means, he very well can do it. There is something to be learned there, and that's why you had this assumption among people, who were serious about their theology, that something can be learned here. Now where they drew the line, and the early church drew the same line here, where they drew the line was this notion, just like we saw Paul condemn this idea in Galatians 4, this notion that these celestial objects are themselves deities with any power and that they control human fate. That is bunk. Only God controls human fate. These objects do not. Serious believers would've been offended by what we think of as modern astrology. That was bad theology. We'll let Oprah do that, okay, or somebody else. That is not what we're talking about here. It's not what Paul's thinking in Romans 10. It's not what John was thinking when he wrote Revelation 12. It's not what Daniel's thinking. Only God controls the flow of history and the fate of humanity. He might message something through these objects, but they themselves have no power over you. And that's why Paul says you're crazy to go back to this now that you've been liberated by Christ. But anyway, I know that was a long sort of convoluted answer to that, but you get into all sorts of areas about that. I don't think what Daniel's doing is wrong. It's very

evident whose side Daniel is on. It's very evident that God does give him information. He's the one behind Daniel's effectiveness, and there is no question about Daniel's loyalty.