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“Acts 13”

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With

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Acts 13

Acts 13 marks the transition in the book to the ministry of Paul. That is, Paul and the mission to the Gentile nations becomes the focus, whereas the church in Jerusalem fades into the backdrop. In this episode, we'll discuss the odd citation of Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:33, a problem for the idea of soul sleep, and remnant theology.

Here is the paper referenced in the show:

[Meyers Secondary Burials](#)

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 49, Acts 13. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you?

MSH: Doing pretty good Trey.

TS: Great. Well, I'm excited about Acts 13.

MSH: Acts 13 is an important passage because it marks the transition to the ministry of Paul, and that is to the nations, to the Gentiles, reclaiming the nations. We've seen bits and pieces of that up to this point but the focus has really been on the fledgling church in Jerusalem, the apostles who are there in Jerusalem, namely Peter. Peter's been a focal point. But in Acts 13, we're going to transition into the Ministry of Saul or, of course, Paul as we know him better. And so the chapter's pretty important. There are a few things in here that we want to park on a little bit that aren't quite obvious, but I think are still interesting despite the familiarity of this chapter to a lot of listeners. So let's jump in here. In verse 1, we read,

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger [**MSH: which is a term that means black or dark**], Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

MSH: Now just in these first few verses, just a couple of things. The reference to Antioch, we've seen Antioch before in Acts chapter 6:5 when Nicolaus was mentioned. He was a proselyte of Antioch. And proselytes were people who were not Jews but I converted to Judaism. And then certain of those proselytes will subsequently embrace Jesus as the Messiah. We've seen Antioch referenced in Acts 11 with Phoenicia and Cyprus, when Stephen traveled there, and initially, if you go back to Acts 11, the comment about Stephen was that Stephen traveled to these places speaking the word to no one except Jews.

Again, there was this sensibility of we need to take the gospel first, the message of the Messiah to the people whose Messiah it is and that's Jews. And we're going to see that continue here in Acts 13 but by the time we hit this chapter, everybody knows that the gospel has been delivered to Gentiles, and it's for them. They've embraced it. So we've got combination of Jewish believers, Jews who convert to embrace Jesus as Messiah. We've got proselytes. Then we're going to have full-blown Gentiles. WE saw a little bit of that last time. We're not told who the Holy Spirit speaks to in this passage. All we read is the Holy Spirit set apart for me Barnabas and Saul. Again, that's all we're told. So was this an audible voice that everybody heard? I mean, who knows? We just don't know. So I'm not going to speculate about it but it's just kind of interesting that it's not directed at any one person, specifically Barnabas or Saul. It's somebody else or everybody. Verse 4 we continue,

So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.⁶ When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus.⁷ He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. **[MSH: It's kind of incongruent here. Here you have a Jew, and the Jew's the false prophet, and he has a very Jewish name, Bar-Jesus, but then he's a buddy of a Roman. I mean, who is this guy? Kind of a mystery.]**⁸ But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him¹⁰ and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?"¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand.¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

MSH: So that last note I think is important. It's not just the fact that Paul could blind this person through the power of God, but he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. So there's a content element here, too. We're just not told what the whole conversation was but we can imagine. But I want to go back to verse 8, this reference to *Elymas*. This is really a name that no one quite knows really what it means. Now if you look at the narrative, it says elements of the magician, and then a side thought for that is the meaning of his name. There's really no clear term that sort of matches Elymas, this transliteration that means magician. Commentators have come up with some possibilities. I'll just share them with you. We have Aramaic *Ile Ma*, which means strong.

That doesn't really quite fit, depends on what you're strong in though I suppose. We have Arabic *Alim*, which is close to the Greek *mágos* or magician. So that's a possibility, maybe a South Arabian term. *Alim* is used, for instance, in Arabic writings for learned or omniscient, and it's a description that's supplied to *Allah*. So that is probably your closest sort of etymological counterpart or possibility for how you could get to magician, someone who's learned or knows mysterious things, magician very broadly speaking. So, it's a guess, but it's probably the best guess and people are still wondering about, well, what exactly it is Luke talking about here. Again, you're in Judea.

Not everybody speaks the same language. There are a number of dialects, of course, other Semitic languages. And so you might have some cross-fertilization here. That might explain the South Arabian or the Arabic might explain this particular term. But the whole event is really to illustrate one thing. When Paul refers to him as the son of the devil, the whole idea really goes back to passages like 1 John 3:10, we can refer to that where John writes about the children of God and the children of the devil. It sort of defines the children of the devil as those who do not practice righteousness, those who don't love their brother. Basically those who are

not aligned with the way God wants people to behave and what God wants them to believe. They are naturally, therefore, the sons of the devil. We have references to this in John, the gospel of John, as well.

It's not like sort of a physical seed. You'll see this kind of stuff on the Internet about the seed of the serpent and all this kind of thing. In Scripture, basically, what those are references to are people who are rebellious against God in the same way or exercising the same spirit of rebellion as the serpent in the garden. So they become that seed, sort of metaphorically that offspring of the serpent because he is the original rebel, the original opposer of God's plan, of what God wants to do. And it certainly fits here with *Elymas* because the text very specifically said he interfered here so the proconsul would be veered away, steered away from the faith. He didn't want anyone to believe it, so he's very clearly in an oppositional role. Let's go down to verse 13.

Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. [MSH: **They're starting to migrate away westward.**] And John left them and returned to Jerusalem,¹⁴ but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

MSH: And here we get a little anecdote of what sort of went on in the synagogue. Briefly the rulers of the synagogue read from the law of the prophets and then they say, brothers, if any of you have a word of encouragement for the people, say it, and, of course, Paul takes that opportunity right away. He motions with his hand in verse 16. Then he starts on his sermon, his speech. And so from about verse 16 all the way down to around verse 30, it sort of a rehearsal of Old Testament history all the way up through, again, and hitting some highlights to John the Baptist, news of what had happened in Judea with John the Baptist and with this guy named Jesus have by now circulated. Paul refers to it verse 23

²³ Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴ Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance...

MSH: So he's assuming that the Jews, even though they're living outside of Judea, the Jews in this synagogue have heard all this stuff. And of course, there's nothing to the contrary in the narrative. They have heard all of it. The reaction, though, at the end of the day, we'll get to that in a moment, is a bit different. Initially, it's more positive, at least at this one gathering. They're also going to get opposition from Jewish leaders there, too. But we go down to about verse 30, and I want to start getting into some pretty heady theological stuff. So Paul says in his sermon, he's talking about Jesus. We'll just go to verse 29.

²⁹ And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead, ³¹ and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. ³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the

fathers, ³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, [**MSH: And here he's going to quote the Old Testament, and maybe you'll see the oddity of the quote right away or maybe not. We're going to park on this awhile.**] as also it is written in the second Psalm, [**MSH: Psalm 2:7, so there's no ambiguity. Here's the quote**]

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you.’

³⁴ And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

“I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’

³⁵ Therefore he says also in another psalm,

“You will not let your Holy One see corruption.’

MSH: So what I want to focus in on though is the first of these, Psalm 2:7. Here's the question. Why would Paul quote Psalm 2:7? I'll read it to you. “You are my son. Today I have begotten you.” Why would Paul quote that passage in connection with the resurrection of Jesus? How does Psalm 2:7 have anything to do the resurrection? I'll read it again. “You are my son. Today I have begotten you.” Do you see resurrection in there? I don't. How does the original Psalm speak of resurrection? Another question, what about the resurrection provoked the thought of Jesus as the son? Wasn't he the son before this? How does begetting, third question, speak of the resurrection? Isn't that an odd term to be used? If you're talking about resurrection, would you really use the word beget? And lastly, another sub-question. Did Jesus only become the son of God in some sense at the resurrection? What in the world as Paul thinking here? None of this seems to fit.

You give go back to verse 30 and he says, hey, God raised him from the dead and now he's appeared to lots of people, and we're his witnesses, and as it's written the second Psalm, “You are my son. Today I have begotten you.” What does that have to do with the resurrection? What are the synopses in Paul's brain connecting here? It just seems so odd. And again, we sort of tend to read over these quotations real quickly because they're just there in the text so we read them. What else would we do with them? You need to slow down and think about what you're reading. Scholars of course have noticed this for a long time, the apparent incongruity of this particular quotation, sonship, begotten, what does that have to do with the resurrection? Again, I thought Jesus was the son already. What's going on here? Now there are a couple of approaches to this.

Some have argued that the text was originally applied to the resurrection of Jesus as some sort of begetting in that Jesus gets new life. Okay, so some have tried to connect the begetting terminology with the resurrection by saying when you're raised from the dead you get new life so you're sort of begotten again, right? Okay, and when he's resurrected, he is enthroned at the right hand of God, so that sort of makes sense with Psalm 2 because Psalm 2 is about the King, the Davidic King. Okay, so maybe there's some sort of association we can make there. Now

one of the issues with that approach, and other approaches, is that this notion of Jesus only becomes the son of God at the resurrection. Again, that has roots in a number of, I'll use the word, early heresies in the church, in the early church, things they had to deal with. And you see how it's called adoption in Christianity.

And it's very easy to be an adoptionist, which would ultimately, doesn't necessarily have to but would ultimately for many, lead to denial of the son's eternality, because here you have this guy Jesus and God adopts him as his son either through the resurrection or through some other means. Well that's sort of undermines other things that are said in the Gospels about the person of Jesus before the resurrection, and it undermines passages like John 1:-3, and throw verse 14 in there, 'word became flesh and dwelt among us.' I mean it's really, how can I characterize this to be a little courteous here. You could say it's not a very orthodox trajectory, but it's also not a coherent one either because of some of this other stuff that has preceded Acts 13, and preceded the resurrection in Jesus' own lifetime before the crucifixion, of course events and statements that were made by him and about him. So there's a little bit of trouble there. Now we have to factor in a couple of other things here. If you go to Romans 1:3, that becomes an important text here. Listen to this verse. I'll just start in verse 1 in Paul's epistle.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead,

MSH: So you get two ideas there. You get Jesus, who is a son of David "according to the flesh." You get Jesus as the son of God in the power the spirit by his resurrection. So you get both ideas in there. So does that have any contribution to make back in Acts 13 when Paul quotes Psalm 2:7? I think it does. Let's look at another one, Hebrews 1:3. We have here the writer of Hebrews describing the son in verse 2 of course is Jesus. He says this in verse 3,

³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, [**MSH: of course that's the crucifixion**] he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, [**MSH: that's the resurrection**]⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say,

"You are my Son,
today I have begotten you"?

MSH: So Hebrews connects this divine sonship idea with the resurrection as well. So these verses need to be, play some role in how we understand Paul's quotation back in Acts 13 in this episode. Now the bottom line, just so we don't lose track here, the bottom line of the problem is the begetting is not an obvious metaphor for resurrection, but we also have other passages that

have this sense that Jesus either, now here's the tricky part, Jesus either becomes the son of God at his resurrection, that's the adoptionist view, that's how they would view this, and then of course you don't have to really have an eternal son. So either begetting results in Jesus becoming the son of God or there's a different possibility and that is that Jesus was validated as the son of God by the resurrection. I'm going to return to this thought in a moment because there's one other thing here to throw into this, and that is the verse right after the quotation of Psalm 2:7.

So Paul says, hey, he's raised Jesus. You are my son. Today I have begotten you, and then Paul says in verse 34, "and as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, the word raised there in Greek is *Anastasis*. Now here's an issue. That same verb is used in a number of other places by Luke, who is the writer of Acts, and also in Acts, Luke 1:69, Acts 3:22, that word is used not of bodily resurrection in the way that we're thinking of being raised from the dead. It's also used to convey the idea of raised up, in other words, put on the stage of history, and not a resurrection from death. Let me just take a look at some of the passages here. Luke 1:69, this is Zechariah's prophecy. Zechariah says, "Blessed be the God the Lord God of Israel, for he is visited and redeemed his people. He has raised up," there's the word, "raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." In other words, he's now about to put on the stage of history the Messiah. He's going to show up. He's not going to be raised from the dead. He's going to show up. Acts 3:22, another one, "Moses said, the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers." In other words, someone's going to come upon the scene. So here's the question. Is that what Paul's thinking back when he quotes Psalm 2:7? Let's go back there. So Paul says,

³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers,
³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm,

“‘You are my Son,
today I have begotten you.’

³⁴ And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead...

MSH: So is Paul thinking, well, this whole story, the crucifixion and the resurrection he's been talking about, is he thinking that Psalm 2 therefore means that refers to the point of God making Jesus known on a grand scale, making known the gospel? Is that what Paul's thinking here? Some people like this because it doesn't ask them, it doesn't require them to sort of align begetting language with resurrection. It's just saying, hey, it's just a reference to the fact that these events, the crucifixion and the resurrection, brought Jesus front and center historically in God's plan. That's what Paul means. So which is it? Is it that, coming on stage of history, or is Paul really thinking in resurrection terms here and somehow is using this begetting language? Me personally, I land with the latter. I think Paul is thinking about the resurrection here in a bodily sense. Most scholars I think it's probably fair to say would also land there as well, likely a reference to the resurrection since the immediate context, that's what Paul's talking about, the

physical raising from the dead. Again, I think Romans 1:3-4 is kind of the key to this, that those two verses, I'll read them again to you.

³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead...

MSH: I think what we're seeing there is, in Paul's mind, definitely in Romans 1 but I think since it's the same guy speaking back in Acts 13, what's going on here is that in Paul's mind, look, Jesus was the son of God before the resurrection. Paul knows the stories about the birth. He knows the theology of the Christians that he persecuted and now he preaches. He knows all that stuff and he's saying look, Jesus this man, was the son of David. He was the Messiah. He was as he's just, in verses 26-30, he was this person to which the prophets witness that God had promised. This whole history lesson he's given them in the passage, this is the guy. He is the Davidic descendent, but when God raised him from the dead, that didn't mean that he became the son of God. It means he was validated as the son of God. So you say, how does that jive with the begetting language?

Well, we go back to what we're talking about before. This notion of producing this person from the dead, again, that God has given him new life whereas the moment before God raised him from the dead, he didn't have life. And so the begetting language does not really speak of God initially looking at him as his son. God looked at Jesus as the son before this, but the act of raising him from the dead gives new life to him, raises him up from the dead, gives him new life and validates the fact that he is the son of God, because, frankly, how else are you going to rise from the dead unless you're the son of God? How else are you going to do this, because there are passages that even suggested Jesus had a role his own resurrection as well in parts of the Gospel, not here, but you get that element, too. And it's odd language, I think we all have to admit that, it's odd language to use but the fact that it's in Psalm 2:7, which speaks of the King who's the son of David, Jesus, the son of David, according to Romans 1:3, 'after the flesh', but he's also the son of God.

And here's the proof, he rose from the dead. This is not humanly possible. This is God validating everything we're saying right now in this moment about Jesus, everything Jesus said about himself and everything that all the other witnesses to this person have said about him. He is the son of God and the resurrection is the proof. So in spite of the oddity of the language, I think the theological path or the theological understanding of why Paul would say what he said, again, comparing Scripture with Scripture, comparing Paul's statement here to especially Romans 1:3-4, I think we can see how Paul's mind is working. It's not something bizarre but is something that makes sense but it takes two or three steps along a certain path to really get what he's doing here, and understand why he's saying what he's saying. I want to go down to verse 36. We'll pick up there. Paul says,

³⁶ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. ³⁸ Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and by him everyone

who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

MSH: We'll stop there. The one thing I want to camp on here for little bit is this phrase, because I get asked this question a lot, "David, after he served the purpose of God in his generation fell asleep and was laid with his fathers." Now I get asked the question all time about this sleep terminology. Is this soul sleep? There some easy go to passages for this idea, 1 Thessalonians 4, the Lord returns and those that are sleep will rise, all this sleep language. So we get this idea of soul sleep, that there's this, you die and there's this like unconscious state. You're asleep like you would be when you're sleeping normally. I don't believe in soul sleep and I don't believe that this passage justifies it. In fact, I think this passage actually undermines it because of the phrase, 'laid with his fathers'.

Now if you go back and I've posted an article for those who are interested in this topic and frankly those are interested in archaeology, I've given Trey an article by Eric Meyers. When you look at the article, you won't think it's really about this but it actually is. The article is on secondary burial and around page 15, pages 15 through 17, Meyers discusses in light of the archaeological stuff associated with secondary burial, he discusses the phrase, to go to your fathers, to be gathered to your fathers, to be gathered to your ancestors, that is used in the Old Testament as a euphemism for dying and passing into the afterlife. When you died as an Old Testament person, and you say I'm going to be gathered up to my fathers, I'm going to be gathered my ancestors, and Genesis 49:29 is a good verse. Let me just go there quickly and I'll read that to you. Genesis 49:29, this is Jacob and he says,

²⁹ Then he commanded them and said to them, "I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

MSH: So he says, I'm going to be gathered my people, to my ancestors so bury me with my fathers in the cave. There's going to be other skeletons in there, and I'll go back to secondary burial is in a moment. There's going to be other remains in there, in the cave here, but Jacob says I'm going to be gathered to my people. Now does that mean he's just going to have his bones piled with them? Meyers article goes into this at length and it shows through the archaeology this is not what they were thinking. Secondary burial, think about it. Let's say you're a patriarchate, and you're out there in the desert. You're doing your thing and somebody drops over dead.

Well, you might be a long, long way from your ancestral burial ground. Did you ever stop to think what do they do with the body? It's in the desert. It's just not going to last long. What do they do with this thing? Well, it is the same thing in the later New Testament. I hope nobody has had lunch before this but they do the same thing in the New Testament period. When you have people who are initially buried and then later on, their bones are collected and put in these ossuary's, these bone boxes, in the New Testament period, I'll go back to the Old Testament period in a second. In the New Testament period, when people are living in towns, it's a little more organized. Okay, somebody dies. You go put them in the cave. Roll the stone over the front just like Jesus was buried, this kind of arrangement. There are different kinds of graves but you put them in there and then you wait for like six months or a year or whatever it

is, for the flesh to rot off, just rot away and get eaten by bugs and stuff like that. Then you go in and you collect the bones and then you deposit the bones in a box and that goes in your family tomb.

That is a secondary burial. Now in the Old Testament, they're not living in cities. You're out in the desert. Who knows where you are. And it's a long way, you're not going to carry a corpse with you, 100s of miles possibly, to the ancestral burial ground. It's going to attract animals. It's going to stink. It's just going to be gruesome and gross. So what you did was you boiled the remains until in the flesh fell off and then you collected the bones and took them back and had your secondary burial that way. You got rid of your remains. You could burn it, bury it, whatever. But you had to de-flesh the body and then take the bones back. And so that's when they're deposited back in whatever the ancestral burial plot is. We don't have embalming. The Egyptians embalmed. Joseph gets embalmed. Most cultures did not embalm. So what Meyers article is about, it's about secondary burial, because as archaeologists discovered these things, the heads are often removed.

They're disarticulated from the rest of the body, and there certain things done with them, certain positions there in, certain things are buried with people, that indicate very very clearly that those burying the people or interring the bones believed that their ancestors, the person they're burying, was still alive to enjoy the company of the other bones, the other people, that he or she is buried with. They had a belief in a conscious afterlife, not an unconscious sleep is the point. So I would invite you if you're interested in this topic, when Jacobs says I'm going to be going to my ancestors, he doesn't say I'm going to be taking a long nap, then maybe someday I'll see my relatives. No, he says I'm going to be gathered my people. I'm going to see them. I'm going to be with my ancestors. And to make that happen, make sure that you bury me where they are. It's a conscious afterlife.

So the archaeology does not support soul sleep and neither do the textual references go with it. So I thought I ought to say something about this because I do get this question a lot. I'm not sure why it's on the mind of a lot of people but you don't have soul sleep in this passage or, frankly, in other passages. It's just really not much in support of it. We look at the word sleep and assign certain things to it, assign certain ideas to this unconscious state. That is not how they looked at it in the Old Testament. We can see that by virtue what they did with their dead. It's that simple. Now lastly, I want to go to verse 48 and this is after Paul has said, we might as well go back to verse 46, when Paul, eventually they get into trouble. The initial response back into the early 40s was good. People were fascinated. They urged the people along. The people begged them to come back the next Sabbath. It was a great thing but then when they came back and there was a huge crowd, the Jews saw, certain Jews anyway, saw the crowds and they get jealous, and they opposed what they were saying. So verse 46 we read,

⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

MSH: That's the line I want to say something about. There really isn't an adequate way, and I'm not interested in getting around the language here, but there's no adequate way to get around the language. The verb here ordained is *tasso*. It appears four times in Acts, 13:48, 15:2, 22:10 and chapter 28:23, and it shows up elsewhere in the New Testament and it means to appoint or assign. It's not a complicated word. And so here, it refers to the appointing or assigning by God of salvation to certain people. It's a really strong passage on divine sovereignty, the role of divine sovereignty and salvation. I personally connect this with something in that rises out of the Old Testament referred to as remnant theology. Now what remnant theology is, just in a nutshell, is the notion that from the very beginning, going all the way back to the garden when God decided not to destroy humanity for rebellion, which is what the serpent wanted, God says I'm not going to do that.

There's no plan B here. I'm not a destroy them and I'm not going to change my desire to live among my people on this place that we call Earth, and with my unseen family. We're not changing any of that. I'm going to forgive them and we're going to move on. And so there's this notion from that point forward through the New Testament as badly as humanity screws up and gets, God never lets the thing die. He never lets the whole of humanity ruin everything. When he has to, he will step into history and he will preserve a remnant. He did it with Noah. He disinherits the nations at Babel in Genesis 11. We've talked about how that ripples into Acts 2 and beyond. But even when he does that, he turns around and he calls Abraham, really, on a whim. Who's Abraham? God just says I'm not going to let it die. I'm going to give you the nations. I'm going to give you what you want. You go off and I'm going to assign you to other gods. You'll see how that works. You don't want to follow me. You don't want to obey after the flood. I get it.

Do your own thing. Be regretful of what you wished for because now you're going to get it. But then he turns around and he says, ok, this guy will do. Abraham, this guy in Ura, the Chaldeans, I think it's Northwest Mesopotamia, but that's a subject for another time. He calls him and says your wife's old. You can't have kids. That's a good thing because I'm going to raise up children through you and everyone will know that your descendants are even alive because of supernatural divine intervention by me, and you are going to be my family. And it's through you that I'm going to extract a remnant from them, from the nations. Not all of your seed, Abraham, is going to believe and not all of them are going to believe, but I'm going to have my own. I'm going to have my family no matter how bad it gets. I am not going to let it die. And so, yes, God does intervene and act in a sovereign way so that people believe and, in this case, look at the context, who are they?

They're Gentiles. This is a dramatic sovereign statement of God saying look, look what he says to the Jews through Paul. Since you see yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we're going to the Gentiles. That is a stinging indictment. That is just what God did back at Babel to the nations when it was reversed. God disinherited the Gentiles and then he started the nation of the Israelites with Abraham. This is a complete reversal of that. So it's like, okay, we're turning our back on you the Jews, the ones that should be listening because you think yourself unworthy of eternal life, and now we're going to the Gentiles. And then we get this statement as many as God

appointed of eternal life, they believed. It's a very dramatic theological statement that God says I am going to have some people from every blasted nation on this planet. There will be no place, there will be no nation under the dominion of other gods where I don't, pardon the pun, get my pound of flesh. I will have my own family from every nation. That's why Paul just quoted in verse 47, "The Lord is commended us saying, I've made you a light to the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth, and if God has anything to do with it, and of course he does, there will be no nation that is not targeted and has family members for Yahweh extracted from it.

The powers that be over those nations have nothing to say about it. So God does intervene to make the program work. He doesn't destroy humanity. He lets things run. He honors free will, but if God needs to, God will intervene. He will knock Saul off his horse, just deciding to do it, saying it's your time. I have picked you. Get off your butt now and go to Damascus. God will do that and God will start, this is Acts 13 folks. This is the beginning of the reclaiming of the nations in an offensive posture. Cornelius just happened to be there. God directed Cornelius through the angel. He directed Peter through the dream. That was assigned to the Jews that look, from this point on we're going after the Gentiles, too. Cornelius was assigned to them. Don't get in the way. Don't think that I'm not behind this. Don't stick your nose into this and correct it. It doesn't need correcting. What God has called clean don't call unclean. Stay out of the way, and in this chapter he says, separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work that I have chosen for them to do. It's the Spirit who does it. And then they go into this first place and we have as many as appointed to eternal life believed. God is acting to get the ball rolling.

It's a strong statement of sovereignty that we shouldn't shy away from. But it's tied to this notion that God will never let this thing die. He will never let it go under. He will never let the unseen supernatural powers get a complete victory, and he will never let humanity screw it up so badly that it can't be remedied. He will not let that happen. And that's the backdrop for statements like this. So that's the last thing I wanted to cover today. It's a controversial passage but it has a framework. It has a backdrop. It has a context and we need to pay attention to those things.

TS: You mentioned God wouldn't let it die and He wouldn't let the supernatural realm win. It's amazing that he set the game in motion, if you will, with planting the tree of life, the temptation itself because he knew Adam and Eve would eat it and start this whole process to where we are now. So before it even started, he knew, he set it in motion by putting the temptation to begin with. Otherwise, they wouldn't of been disobedient, because they wouldn't have the opportunity to.

MSH: Right. Humanity is created like God, which means we share divine attributes with God. One of those attributes is freedom. If we were not free, we couldn't be like God. By definition, we couldn't image him if we lacked that attribute. So God deems that whole plan to create humans as his image, his imagers, with the risks that entails. And he's God, he knows what they're going to do with it because they're not him. They're not going to be morally flawless. They're not always going to make the right choices because by definition, they aren't God. They're not perfectly holy in their nature and their inclinations. They're going to fail but God deems that preferable over not having humans at all or having to destroy them after the fact. God is able to

work his plan without having to destroy free will or destroy humans, the people who carry it, the people who image him. I can't remember if it's here or if it's somewhere else but this whole illustration about the divine chess match. Have I used that on the podcast at all?

TS: No, not yet.

MSH: Well, in all these discussions of sovereignty and free will, here's where it really comes down. Here you have two choices. I'm going to ask you, who is the greater God? Let's say I'll be God in the illustration and you can be my opponent Trey. We sit down at a table and we're going to play a game of chess. I look at you from across the table and I say, you're going to lose this game because I have predestined every move you're going to make and I win in the end. That's going to shake you up. But I would suggest that this God is greater than this next one. What if we sit at the table and I say, you know Trey, we're going to play a game of chess now and you can move wherever you want and I'm still going to win. I haven't predestined any of your moves, but I'm just telling you right now, you will not win. I will win this match. To me that's a far and away greater God.

He doesn't have to stack the deck. He doesn't have to turn you into a robot to win the match. He's just better, and he's better than everybody. That to me is more fantastic for a God to be able to do that and not have to manipulate the outcome by predestinating what I do and turning me into a robot. For the other God, the second God, to look me in the eye and say it doesn't matter what you do. Do what you want. I'm still going to win. The outcome is sure. That's what we have with this whole question of evil and all this kind of thing. Evil happens because people have free will and they aren't God, okay? There you go. They will use their God likeness in selfish ways that are inconsistent with God's own nature, and God knew that, and God said I would rather have that because I'm still going to win. I would rather have that than not have them at all.

TS: I've always wondered that since God knows all and knowing something and experiencing it is two different knowledges. If you experience something, for instance, if have a set of instructions to put together a bicycle, I know how to build a bicycle versus somebody who already built the bicycle. They have a different type of knowledge. We both know how to build a bicycle, one has experience. one has just the knowledge. So I've always wondered if that's what our purpose is, is we're experiencing God's knowledge. He already knows everything but we're actually carrying out his knowledge which is an infinite amount of possibilities, which free will comes in because it's limitless.

MSH: I think that what you described, there's a role for that to the play that idea is part of the picture obviously. We can't experience all of possibilities but we do experience things that God already knows, intellectually and whatnot. So there is that sort of that intersection you were describing.