

# **The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0**

**Number 108**

**“Q&A 14”**

**Dr. Michael S. Heiser**

**With**

**Residential Layman  
Trey Stricklin**

**July 10, 2016**

## **Q&A 14**

Our 14th Question and Answer episode!

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 108, Q&A 14. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing?

**MSH:** Good, how are you Trey?

**TS:** I'm doing pretty good Mike. Before we get started here, I wanted to challenge our listeners. We need to come up with a cover name for our listeners like naked nation or something, but I don't know.

**MSH:** Let's not do that one.

**TS:** Alright. I want to challenge our listeners. We have enough listeners, 1000s of listeners, and whether you use iTunes or the Google Play app to listen to our podcasts, if you could go write us or subscribe to us on the Android Play, we'd appreciate it. Out of the thousands of listeners, we've got about 33 ratings on iTunes. So even if you don't listen through iTunes, if you at least go leave a rating or review, we'd appreciate it. To be honest, if everybody left one of those, we would skyrocket to the very top because most of the popular podcasts have a couple thousand in their ratings.

**MSH:** So are you saying if our listeners did that, I would be ranked above people like Joel Olsteen?

**TS:** Yes this is what I'm talking about.

**MSH:** Let's consider that a mission.

**TS:** Exactly, I want to challenge our listeners. By the end of the year, I want to have like 1000 or 2000 ratings or something. There's no reason not to. We have enough people to do that. So even if you have an iPhone, all you got to do is open up your Apple podcast app, go to the naked Bible, and then rate us right there. You don't even have to leave a review if you don't want to.

**MSH:** That would be a nice Christmas present for me.

**TS:** Yeah, I want to try. That would be neat. Also on the Google site, if you go subscribe to our podcast on that side as well, we'd appreciate it, to help other people discover us.

**MSH:** We're discovering a lot of these sorts things really are based on input like this. When people like something or rate something, they may not think it actually does anything but it really does. I had naked warriors just pop in my head.

**TS:** Instead of naked and afraid, we could be naked in the bible, nude nation. We need something to do with the nude, naked, buff.

**MSH:** Then we really would be part of the occult conspiracy right there.

**TS:** That's okay. At least it would increase the listenership, right? It would be reaching the people who actually need it, so that's actually a positive. Let's jump into our questions here. Our first two questions are from Mark from Frankfurt, Germany. His first question is, Genesis 2-3 seems to indicate that mankind had conditional mortality with them having access to the tree of life and then being kicked out of the garden. How does this affect the future judgment? What happens to a person who dies without Christ? What is your take on eternal punishment, annihilation etc.? How does the resurrection of the unjust fit into this?

**MSH:** Well, Adam and Eve, I do believe they did have they conditional immortality. In other words, if they wouldn't have sinned and they perpetually abide in the presence of God, essentially God's house, Eden, they would have kept on living. So I would say it's conditional immortality. Everybody has, if you want to reverse the line everybody's mortal. They're going to die from something. So given the way I'm adjusting the wording here, I'm not quite sure what is sort of troubling Mark to ask the question, but I'll take a stab at it. If they're kicked out of the garden and really the rest of humanity sort of follows this template that we aren't born into the presence of God, we have to be brought back into relationship with God. It's just another way of saying salvation is needed.

So that is the one thing that to me just seems the most obvious if we're going back to the Edenic scene and thinking about it theologically. What happens to a person who dies without Christ? They have a Christ-less eternity. They spend eternity outside the presence of God, the family of God, to use other scriptural language, they're lost, that that sort of thing. That naturally takes us into where the questioner took us. What was your take on eternal conscious punishment or annihilation, so on so forth. I think for me both of those things are actually still on the table. And I've said before on the podcasts that it really depends on how you read certain language especially in the book of Revelation when it describes the final judgment. So when I look at it, the thing that really puts annihilation on the table for me is the reference to the death of death, both in Revelation that also one place in 1 Corinthians. If death itself is truly destroyed, and that is what you actually read in the book of Revelation, then I don't know how death could be eternally ongoing. It's either destroyed or it's not. So annihilation seems to make a lot of sense in respect to that verse.

Of course, if you have annihilation, that's permanent. So the judgment is permanent, separation is permanent. Does it have to be conscious is really the question for some people. Some will take like Revelation 14:11, "the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever." Well, if they were destroyed, the results of that are permanent, too, and the smoke could be just a reference to the fact that they had been destroyed, consumed, and annihilated in the flame. So the language of going up forever and ever doesn't really help resolve the debate. That's part of why there is a debate. So I think both of those things are on the table. If push came to shove, I think annihilation makes the best sense but it's certainly not the only view that you could come out of that passage in at least one other. It is hard for me to see how death itself could be destroyed and yet be ongoing in the eternal way. Those two things just don't seem to go together. But I'm not willing to sort of push the more traditional view to the side but I think annihilation really needs serious consideration. For me, both are on the table.

**TS:** Mark also wants to know what is the relationship between the heavenly host as divine beings and the celestial objects? Why does Paul mention the celestial bodies in the context of the

bodily resurrection? Some occult and esoteric teachings hold the belief that the heavenly bodies are living creatures. What is your take on this?

**MSH:** For the part of the question, why does Paul mention the celestial bodies in the context of bodily resurrection, the answer is please listen to the David Burnett episode. We spent well over an hour talking about that passage so I'm not going to try to shortcut that and really not do it justice. For the other parts of the question, what's the relationship between these two things and the occult esoteric teaching? I'll just take that one. What's my take on that? I don't believe for a minute that heavenly bodies are living creatures. Heavenly bodies are rocks and gas and whatever astronomy tells us. You have to realize in the ancient world, they don't know any of this. And so there are celestial objects in the heavens that move around and so some people, not everybody, the ancient world is just like our modern world. Do all people on any given subject all agree? Do they all think the same way on the same thing on a given subject answer's no. The people in the ancient world are the same way.

So what I'm going to say here isn't monolithic. There were a variety of positions or ideas but there were many people who looked up in the heavens and say those things are moving around up there and they're not us. They're not human so therefore they must be divine. In other words, they don't have a default astronomical science category, at least if you're appealing to the masses here. So the conception was that either they are living beings that are moving around. And those who thought maybe they're not living beings, maybe they are like things or objects in the sky but maybe they're empowered by the gods or by living beings. You had that view, too. So when a person the ancient world decided to worship one of these things, regardless of what they're thinking, is it a living being, is it a piece of something, an object empowered by a living being, you still have idolatry. You are still worshiping this object with the thought that what I'm viewing with the naked eye really isn't an object. It's a deity, or what I'm viewing with the naked eye is an object but it's powered and controlled by a deity that I am now going to worship.

This is why it's condemned in Scripture as worshiping, to borrow a New Testament phrase, worshiping the creature more than the Creator. So that's the relationship. There is no one view of this in antiquity. Paul understands this and mentions this, that some people believe that these are divine beings whether they're Jew, Gentile, whatever. There is no monolithic one position on any given topic. And what he wants is worship the God of Israel, worship the Creator, not these other things, regardless of what you think they are. Even if you're right or if you're wrong, you worship the Creator, not the creature, not the thing created. So that's I think sort of the quick version of the way I would answer that.

**TS:** CJ has a question. How do we reconcile that the culture informed the Israelites view of cultic worship and even morality while the same time acknowledging that God transmitted Commandments, ordinances and God-given morality at Sinai? Was God borrowing morality cultic worship from other cultures while claiming that it was good and acceptable or was it mere coincidence that God had decreed to Israelites to obey their already established cultural preferences?

**MSH:** I think part of the answer to this is Paul talks about the law of God being written on a person's heart whether they had the actual law or not, referring to pagans as this is the basis for

why they do righteous things and why they are accountable to God and why they're actions can be judged one way or the other as being right or wrong. There's this, some people would use the phrase, natural law. There are just these sort of God-given orientations within a human being that are just there to give everyone a sense of right and wrong, whether that is codified in a document or not. I think that's part of what's going on here. God's not saying I'm out of moral things now. I need to go borrow one from a pagan or from some other culture. God doesn't run out of ideas and have to go borrow some moral principle. That's not the way to look at the cultural similarity.

Cultural similarity, even if they're no written law exists, Paul would say that's because we're created as imagers of God. We have this thing called a conscience. We have this sort of built-in sense of right and wrong. So whether it's written down or not, they're various forms of it that might be similar, might have some differences. It's still trying to work out this sense of right and wrong. So that's part of what's in view here. People were who I think generally speaking, people were who they were when God decided to meet them and use them or enter into a covenant relationship with them. So when it comes time to actually talking about the laws of Israel, God's law. The stipulations of those laws were designed to keep Israel distinct sometimes. Most importantly, that distinction meant not worshiping another god. Other times, the laws would more or less just teach certain ideas about the unique God of Israel, the way God viewed creation, the way God viewed what he had done or taught the Israelites something about God's character.

We talked when we were in Leviticus a lot about the idea of creation order. That teaches us something about the nature of God and God himself looks at what he has made. He brings order out of chaos and so there's an order to creation that certain laws are designed to teach people that idea and maintain a creation order way of conducting your life or looking at relationships. So some laws are designed to teach us something about the character of God or the way God looks at things. Not mixing certain things, whether it's fabrics, going back to Leviticus here, teaching the bigger idea of not mixing the holy with the profane, the sacred with the profane. And some laws just exist for that reason and that reason only, to teach us about a principle that is important to God, that is built into the fabric of creation as he made it and he wants us to understand it, how he looks at it and live accordingly and think accordingly about how we are part of creation and how that should affect our behavior. Sometimes things may have seemed more normative to an Israelite.

A particular law or the Law of Moses would be like well yeah, of course we would do this or not do that because their own sense of right and wrong innately or their own cultural sense of you should do this or not do that. A specific law and the Law of Moses would be right alongside that, very consistent with what to do with human excrement. There are laws about that. That's tied to sacred and profane thinking in respect to holy ground and not holy ground and being defiled and so on so forth. But yet, the average person in the ancient world would just know that we should be doing this outside the camp. We don't do it in the house. We don't do it where the kids play. There's just normative things in life that are reflected in Old Testament law but then since they're in Old Testament law, they're often given a higher meaning or a theological orientation to them to teach some bigger, more abstract principle. And I think you have that with food laws, for instance. Some of that would've been normative but given a theological meaning. Other laws were not normative.

They would have been newer. They would've had an immediate specific context, don't offer sacrifices to goat demons. That's a specific situation that Israelites were encountering in the wilderness. We have the whole goat for Azazel thing that's related to that. There are specific contexts to certain things. Mosaic law isn't just one kind of law. The laws in it do not arise from one point of origin or one context. It's a very variegated thing and so it's a little hard to talk terribly specifically about what this or that thing meant and how it relates to a culture because there's going to be some variance with that, depending on what it is and even where it's placed in the law and what category it falls into. I would say even after God removed many of these sort of distinctiveness barriers like in New Testament times with Peter and the Apostles and the Gentiles being brought into the people of God so on so forth, even when some of these barriers are removed, there was no compulsion and no insistence that the Jews go do something that would frankly make them uncomfortable. Now that we have the church, now every Jew has to eat pork.

There's no law like that. God's not going to care if they eat pork or not. That's what Paul says. Some honor this day over that day, some eat this and don't eat that. The whole point is that you don't judge someone's spiritual status by whatever decision they make on those things so there's latitude even when the laws of distinction are sort of dispensed with. That doesn't mean you're compelled now to do something that is really ingrained in your culture, let's say as a Jewish convert. You are not forced to do that. So I think there's just a lot of things to think about here and it's not a very neat subject that you can just sort of put in one drawer and then understand it. There's just a lot more going on when it comes to law and why we have some laws and what they mean and what people are supposed to think and were they normative or not. Are they new or are they old, familiar, unfamiliar? It's just a big playground that has been a lot of stopping points and lots of categories.

**TS:** Gabriel in Dallas Texas has three questions. The first one is, I've noticed that on numerous occasions Mike says that Scripture tells us that the Nephilim were done away with the Old Testament. Why, then, are there still instructions that are suggestive of the angels still having potential to be enticed? For instance, if the reference to angels on the head covering harken back to Genesis 6, why is that significant unless cohabitation is still possible? Also, why does it matter if a woman's hair is covered in the new covenant?

**MSH:** I would say first, the wording of the questions sort of presumes that the watchers of the sons of God and the Nephilim are kind of the same, but they're not. I think the questioner understands that, but the wording of the questions makes me wonder just want a little bit. So I'll just start there. 1 Corinthians 11 obviously doesn't mention Nephilim but the gist of the question is, why was Paul concerned? Well, the fact that Paul would be concerned about angelic enticement is no justification for arguing that there are Nephilim now. It just means he was concerned. It means exactly what you think it would be, that in Paul's mind, that this possibility was there. A possibility is not an actuality. These are just simple ways of just thinking coherently about the topic we're discussing.

The instructions Paul give, I don't really even like the word instructions. They're not instructions that Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11 about the head covering in the sense that Paul saying do X because if you don't do X, then Y will happen. That isn't the sense of what Paul's doing. Rather, Paul's advice shows he's concerned. He considers a Genesis 6 like event to

perhaps be possible. That doesn't mean it was happening. It doesn't mean it would happen again. Paul's just reflecting a fear or concern, something that's kind of lurking in the back of his mind. There's no guarantee that if some woman who listened to Paul and read that says forget that. I'm leaving my head covering. I going do what I want, flaunt my sexuality. That doesn't mean that something's going to happen to her. In other words, the cause-and-effect mechanism here is not being taught in 1 Corinthians 11. It isn't teaching a cause-and-effect reality, and some cases, even a potentiality.

What it does, Paul's wording suggests is that in his mind, he thought there's a reason to consider there's some possibility here. But we can't sort of convert that possibility in Paul's head to something that would indeed happen. Possibilities are just that, they're possibilities. They are not actualities. A potentiality is not in actuality. We could go over these terms like this to try to draw the distinction but I think that would get a little annoying. So I would just say Paul isn't predicting anything. His words reflect a concern of his. There's no evidence from the fact that he was concerned that anything was happening. The Old Testament does make it quite clear that the giant clan lines were destroyed. That's the whole point of what happens with the Rephaim. The remnant there flees to the cities of the Philistines. That's where we find them next. Goliath and his brothers are taken out, exterminated. We never get another reference to them. Even if you're reading the Septuagint and you have referenced Anakim in Jeremiah, but it's a reference back to the Philistines.

There's just no evidence for this, zero, in Scripture that we have a Nephilim presence beyond the Old Testament period, on into the Intertestamental period, on into the New Testament. All we can say is that from the way Paul wrote this, he thought that it could happen again. In other words, there's nothing in his mind that says it can't happen again. But we can't convert that to saying it was or it is, or if somebody just flaunted their sexuality, some woman in Corinth that it was going to happen. That was the trigger event. It's going to produce this effect. This is the cause that produces this effect. All those things are overstatements. They overstate the data so I don't think we should read into what Paul said. We should just leave it where Paul left it.

**TS:** Gabriel's second question also is concerning cohabitation. Is this what Jesus means in Matthew when he speaks of the days of Noah, marriage, and the end times, and could this possibility have any ties to the man of sin possibly being a result of such things?

**MSH:** We did a little bit of this in the head covering episode. Paul is trying to get the Corinthians do the right thing in terms of sexual modesty and sexual fidelity within marriage because he has this concern, and other concerns frankly. He's talking to the Corinthians who must have done just about everything under the sun in this area. But anyway, those things matter for new covenant living, for New Testament living. Why wouldn't they, fidelity, modesty, whatnot? Paul is speaking to Gentiles here. I think they understand what's going on clearly. As far as what's going on, is there is some relationship between this and Matthew 24 or the Gospels or the end times with the man of sin?

I don't think that there's any direct proof, any direct even evidence that the antichrist figure has anything to do with Genesis 6:1-4. The key word there is direct. You did have people like Irenaeus that considered Genesis 6:1-4 to be a possible backdrop, that there may be some sort of indirect tie in between Genesis 6:1-4 and the anti-Christ, the man of sin. So his argument



was more peripheral, more sort of character-based. He ties it in with the idea that the gibborim of Genesis 6 were tyrants and so he thinks that the man of sin is going to be a tyrant. Irenaeus will talk about Genesis 6:1-4 in relationship to the antichrist figure but he never says anything like that cohabitation is going to happen again to produce the anti-Christ. He never says anything like that and neither does anybody else, neither does any text. Now personally, I think there are peripheral indirect connections between the antichrist figure and the sin of the watchers and what happens in Genesis 6:1-4.

I'm actually working, I've mentioned this a couple times on the podcast, I'm working on a book now about the book of Enoch, basically, how the whole book's about how Enoch's story of the transgression of the watchers plays an important role for a number of New Testament writers in their theology. I'm not going to rabbit trail into that. This is actually the sort of little infomercial or commercial for the newsletter. This is exactly the kind of thing in the newsletter. I'll give you snippets of what I'm working on. I'll give you a portion of this whole Genesis 6 antichrist thing that's going to appear in that book. But I won't blog it. I'm not going to blog about what's to come in a future book, but I will put stuff like that in the newsletter. So let me just bring all that down to this point. I don't think there's any direct connection between these two things, Genesis 6:1-4, the Nephilim, and the Antichrist. I do think there are peripheral indirect suggestive sort of connections that are not clear but that may indicate that there's something about that event that has a role to play in the Antichrist figure.

I know that's kind of a convoluted way to say it but I think it's better than just saying indirect versus direct. Back to the Matthew 24 thing, I've commented on that before I think even in a Q&A. I don't think Matthew 24 has any connection to Genesis 6:1-4 because there are no textual connections there. The terminology for marrying and intermarriage in Matthew 24 is not the terminology the Septuagint uses for Genesis 6. If it was, I would change my tune on this. To me, that would be telegraphing a connection but it just isn't there. And the rest of the things that are described in Matthew 24 about what people were doing before the flood entirely refer to the human population of Noah's day. So to me, it's cheating to take four or five things that are described in Matthew 24, pluck one of them out and say this is about the Nephilim. That to me is not legitimate hermeneutics. But if there was a connection via the Septuagint to that passage, that would be a little different because then, to me, if you listen to the podcasts long enough you know those kinds of things are important to me because the writer is trying to draw our attention back to a specific passage by virtue of the Septuagint. That does not occur in Matthew 24.

**TS:** His next question, in breaking down the reasons for the evil state of the earth, Dr. Mike has stated that the watchers are instrumental. So, since the temptation was sexual, could the current and past invasion of perversion and sexual grip even on Christians be the evil powers primary method of enforcing their theology or government?

**MSH:** On one hand, I don't think we need the watchers to explain human immorality, especially sexual immorality. Everybody has the urge and they're going to fulfill the urge, and it's pretty much that simple. On the side of this, it is true that in Second Temple Jewish theology that the proliferation of evil gets blamed on the watchers, or at least the watchers bear a significant part of the burden in that literature. By the way, people of the Second Temple period aren't denying that the human condition, the depravity, they're not denying that depravity is the result of an

inner impulse that the people just have because they're not God and they're natural born. People are going to sin so they're not denying that. But they do look at what goes on with the transgression of the watchers and assign importance to that because it sort of adds gasoline to the fire, to use a modern analogy.

It's just something that made the problem worse and accelerated it, which in the Second Temple Jewish mind is why we get Genesis 6:5, that every thought and imagination of the hearts of people, only evil continually. If you actually just read Genesis 6:1-4, it doesn't seem to have any relationship to verse 5. It really doesn't and it's because it's an abbreviated accounting really harkening back specifically to Mesopotamian theology, which I've dealt with at length in Unseen Realm and elsewhere in the podcast. And the issue with Genesis 6:1-4 really isn't about the proliferation of evil among humanity. That's encapsulated in one verse, verse 5, and that's not a point that emerges specifically from the Mesopotamian context. There are reasons why you don't get a clear connection in the first five verses of Genesis like you do with Second Temple literature, which goes into more of the back story and draws out more details of it than the biblical writer did. So what we have here, on one hand, is we look at what's happening with the degradation of the moral culture today sexually. Is that some indication of continued watcher activity or something?

I don't believe that. I don't think that's even necessary. Are we still dealing with depravity and does the Second Temple theology and New Testament theology, I hate to keep bringing up my book about Enoch, but there's a whole chapter on Galatians 3-4. We did a whole podcast episode on just whose sins we're talking about that necessitated the addition of the law to restrain evil. There is this thread of thought in New Testament theology that what happens in Genesis 6:1-4 contributed to the acceleration of depravity. But to just take that event and use that as the explanation for what we see now I think overstates what's being said there because human beings are going to do what human beings are going to do. And they're going to react on their impulses and run from the law of God. They're going to react selfishly or however you want to characterize it. They're going to sin. We all sin and we can't help but to sin. So that can't be minimized to turn our cultural situation into something that is purely demonic. I'll just throw this in, too. The reason why that sort of rubs me the wrong way, and I'm not saying the questioner's thinking this.

There's nothing in the question that would make me think the questioner's thinking this. But I have heard this in other contexts and from other people. It just makes it too easy to say that we're doing this because of demonic powers, demonic forces, the devil made us do this. We can screw up our lives just fine on our own. I think it sort of lessens our accountability to sort of chalk things up to external forces all the time or at least sort of want to go there all the time. So I'm a little sensitive to that because we do need to own what we do and consider our own role in the way we mess up our lives and the way our culture's going. I'll add one more thought. If you think our culture's bad, do some reading on Greco-Roman culture. We have a long way to go before we ever get as bad as some of that. So let's not have tunnel vision about our own culture. We can actually look at ourselves in many respects and say we're a whole lot better off than we were back then and that would be true. It really would be true. So we want to avoid kind of having too much of a perspective that is dominated by our own circumstances as opposed to what's going on in humanity in other times and really other parts of the world, even today.

**TS:** Gabriel actually has a fourth question, which actually we're going to have a whole show on next week and it's about Jesus referencing gods as men in Psalm 82 and in John 10. You want to touch on that?

**MSH:** Yeah, we do need to devote a whole show to that and that is on the schedule. So it's good timing anyway but I have a whole article on this. It was a paper I read at an academic conference and not an evangelical conference either. This was an SBL regional meeting. I don't know how many years ago but people just don't seem to be able find this link. It lives on more unseen realm.com but since people just don't ever seem to be able to find this thing I've written on this question, and I get this question all the time, we really need to just devote a full episode to this topic. Hopefully, we can just sort of send people links so I don't get the question anymore.

**TS:** A lot of confusion on that one. That's good that we're going to have a whole show next week so that's good. Joseph has a question here and his questions are about Urim and Thummim. I'm doing a word study and found that Urim is related to Ur, maybe the city in Babylon, light, fire, shining flame, so I imagine the fiery stones perhaps. Is there a relationship between the Urim and the stones of fire references?

**MSH:** I don't think there's any relationship at all. Urim and Thummim were not shiny glowing flaming stones for one thing. They were the two stones that were in the breastplate of the high priest. Now on the breast of the high priest, there were 12 other stones. When we did Leviticus, I think it's the episode of Leviticus 8 but I don't know the number of the podcast episode, we talked a lot about the Urim and Thummim so listeners can go back if they didn't listen to that particular Leviticus episode and get more detail. But we talked about the Urim and Thummim were sort of yes and no questions possibly related to the kind of thing you would determine by casting lots. Then the question is what about the gemstones on the breastplate. If anything associates with the high priest, it's going to be corresponding to light and twinkling and all this kind of stuff.

It would not be the Urim and Thummim. It would be those 12 stones. So on that level, I don't think there's anything going on here. I don't think there's any relationship to the city of Ur. I have to be honest. The question sort of makes some presumptions that are not good presumptions in terms of study method but they're very common at the same time. And that is, there's a lot of propensity when people are trying to study biblical words to focus on the sound of a word and when the sound of the word is similar to the sound of a different word, then the assumption is I can connect the meanings of those two separate distinct words because they sound the same. That is just not the way languages work. It is not the way your own language works, English. I mean you could just go all day long on examples and kind of get a good chuckle out of it. I have a pug. Is the word pug and pugnacious related, really? I mean I like to call my pug pugnacious because he'll growl at something. But there's no word relationship between what a pug does by nature, he could be playing with his toy and growling. He's not being pugnacious. He's not being pugilistic either, even though the first three letters of that are the same. He's not like violent and fighting anybody.

You get the idea. Just because a language uses sounds, and all languages do, and they get codified, reduced into writing, doesn't mean there's any relationship between sounds. The word chin in English does not mean what chin means in Chinese. They sound exactly the same. No

kidding, they do, but so what? The human mouth can only make a certain number of sounds. If you study linguistics or phonology, you'll learn things like that. There's a finite number of sounds that your lips and your tongue and the roof of your mouth and, there's just a finite number of sounds that any human being can make. It's something that separates us from any other member of the animal kingdom, even something like a chimp or guerrilla. It's mouth structure and the behavior of the tongue and mouth and teeth, all the parts of your mouth, and even the way that the air flows through.

There's a finite number of these. So you have billions and billions and billions of people and tens of thousands of languages, but they're all humans speaking them. So by definition, invariably and inevitably, human languages will produce, human mouths will produce the same sets of sounds. That doesn't mean at all that a sound in one language has the meaning to a sound in another language. But this is a fundamental error that is often brought into biblical word study. It just doesn't work. Languages don't work that way.

**TS:** The next question's from Michael. I'd love it if you could help me understand a certain Christian doctrine that doesn't make any sense. It is my understanding that the true God of the Bible is a just and righteous God. I cannot comprehend how a just and righteous God can condemn a person for doing something that we were unable to do otherwise. I do not believe that humans are born with Adam's guilt. How can it be our fault if our choice to sin is due to the nature we were made with? How can God fault us and condemn us for disobeying him when we were unable to do otherwise? Is a person's choice to sin condemn them or does the nature condemn them?

**MSH:** I don't think that the questioner is thinking well about what the question is focused on. No one is finally condemned by God because they sin. They are guilty before God because they sin but they can be forgiven. People are condemned in an ultimate sense by God not because they sin but because they didn't accept Christ. They weren't forgiven. So those are two separate but related things. We are held accountable for our sin because we can refuse to sin. The problem is we won't ever be able to always refuse. We are not perfect. We do not have God's nature. As good as we might be at any given point, it will never be unbroken. We will fail. We can't perfectly make the correct choice all of the time.

And so we will become guilty. We are accountable because we could have chosen what we did but we chose to do it. And they're any number of factors as to why people do what they do and so on so forth, just in human behavior, human experience. I could turn it around and say if the terrorist who busted into your house kills your child, should they be accountable? Of course, they should be accountable. The terrorist could have chosen not to do that. To acknowledge they could've chosen not to do that doesn't get them off the hook for doing it. They are free to make the choice to commit a terrorist act. They are also free to make the choice to not commit a terrorist act. These individual acts of sin, individual violations of what God wants in terms of behavior, whatnot, we are accountable for them because we can choose to obey. But God knows that we're not perfect. He knows we are going to fail but we're not condemned because we are fallible. We're condemned ultimately because we never confessed that, never turned to the source of forgiveness.

We never embraced the forgiveness that God offers. God knows what he's dealing with. He knows he's dealing with fallible humans. That's all he's ever going to have in the basket, so to

speak, and so God takes it upon himself to solve the problem. Nobody goes to a Christ-less eternity because they sin. They go there because their sin was never taken care of through the cross. They don't have salvation. They're not saved. Those are two related but different things and distinct things. And what I hear in the question is that distinction is being blurred and in some respects a bit inverted when it comes to articulating what the concern was in the question.

**TS:** The last question is from Andrew and he's wondering if Mike has a working theory on why supernatural occurrences haven't happened en masse since the resurrection of Jesus.

**MSH:** My working theory is how would we know? Just think about the question a little bit. First of all, what does en masse mean? The largest miracle in the New Testament was 500 people. Is that en masse? Is it 10? Is it 500 or a 1000 or a million? It is hard to even quantify that. And how would we ever know whether another group of 500 people didn't witness a true miracle at some remote point in the Gobi Desert in the eighth century? Our recorded historical resources are extraordinarily limited. There was no TV. There's no audio recording. There's no Internet. How do we know? My position or my theory is we don't know. Now, in this regard, I think for people who wonder about this, I would recommend, they're a little expensive. I don't get a kickback. Nothing like that.

I recommended Craig Keener's recent two volume work on miracles. They're thick, dense, and Craig goes through lots and lots and lots and lots of sources that we do have, which is an infinitesimal amount of data compared to the totality of human experience at all times and all places since the resurrection. So this is a minute percentage but what's actually recorded in terms of miraculous events is a lot bigger than people think. We're used to judging these sorts of things by our own life experience, by the experience of our own family, by what we might see in media that are available to us today. We need to widen the net a little bit and I would suggest reading that, getting those. I'll admit, and Craig doesn't have anything to do with this either. I know Craig Keener, a wonderful guy.

But his focus or area of study is he's a New Testament scholar. He does a lot with spiritual gifts and miracles and what not. I could describe him as a small c charismatic kind of person, at least in his tradition but he's a legit bona fide scholar. It might actually be something entertaining to get Craig on the podcast if this is sort of a topic of interest. I'm sure he would do it. But there's a lot more out there as far as "evidence" for this than you might think. But again, how would we really know is my working position. I just don't see any way we would we would be able to read the question and consider it factual because there's just no way to know one way or the other.