

## 1 The Divine Council

- A look behind the veil to the operation and activity
- of the sons of God

## 2 Introduction

- The Bible is primarily about the creation, fall, and redemption of man.
- However, from time to time, we get to see behind the scenes to what is going on in the spirit world and around God's throne in heaven.
- Tonight, I want to take us through a journey of how this spirit world operates and the significance it has for us as sons of Adam, and daughters of Eve—especially as it relates to our purpose and calling.

## 3 The Divine Council

- The term “Divine Council” is a phrase used by Hebrew and Semitics scholars for the heavenly host, the pantheon of divine beings who administer the affairs of the cosmos.
- All ancient Mediterranean cultures had some conception of a divine council.
- Nevertheless, the divine council of Israelite religion, known primarily through the psalms, was distinct in some very important ways.

## 4 Ancient Accounts

- Comparison of the Hebrew Bible with other ancient religious texts reveals overlaps between the divine councils of the surrounding nations and Israel's version of the heavenly bureaucracy.
- Translated shortly after their discovery in the 1930s, literature from Ugarit, contained phrases describing a council of gods that are parallel to the Bible.
- The Ugaritic council was led by El (God) and all around him was a circle of divine beings referred to “the gods” or “sons of god.”
- The Phoenicians also have similar texts that refer to the same type of pantheon, where divine beings called “sons of god” circle a supreme god who rules over them and gives them authority to rule as well.

## 5 Biblical Examples

- God (‘elohiym) has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods (‘elohiym) he holds judgment: (Psa 82:1 NRSV)
- So we see here that according to the Hebrew Bible, God holds court in heaven and around him are angelic beings who are also called gods.
- The heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings? In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him. (Psa 89:5–7 NIV)

- Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. (Psa 29:1 NIV)
- Here we have a picture of the LORD surrounded by his “holy ones,” yet is so awesome, majestic, and wonderful that he is to be feared and ascribed glory and strength.

## 6 The Fall

- Nevertheless, we know that sometime in the ancient past a rebellion arose and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the angels fell and were judged and assigned to, but not yet executed, a life of eternal punishment in a lake of burning fire.
- According to Isaiah 14:12, the leader of this rebellion was the archangel Lucifer, who out of pride sought equality with God.
- According to Jesus, Lucifer (Satan) is the devil and is the father of all lies and succeeds only by using false accusations to cause deception and doubt.
- This can be seen in the Garden of Eden when Satan through the serpent, tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God by lying that God’s wasn’t faithful and that his commandments were not in man’s best interest.
- Once their opinion of God was devalued, Adam and Eve started making moral decisions, based not on what God said, but what seemed best in their own eyes.
- In doing so, Adam and Eve became mortal and lost their position of power and dominion over the earth and became subject to the “fallen” rulers and authorities of the heavenly realm.

## 7 The Book of Enoch

- The Book of Enoch is a very interesting book and (besides the Old Testament) was one of the most popular books in Jesus’ day.
- While it is not a part of the canon of Scripture, it is quoted in two New Testament epistles. (Jude 4, 6, 13, 14–15, and 2 Peter 2:4; 3:13)
- By the way, there are many references to outside sources in the Bible.
  - Book of Jasher (Joshua)
  - Book of the Wars of the Lord (Numbers)
  - Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (1 & 2 Kings)
  - The Book of Samuel the Seer (1 & 2 Samuel)
- But what is so interesting about the Book of Enoch is its description of the workings and operation of angels, which it calls Watchers and how these Watchers interact among the people of the earth.

## 8 The Book of Enoch

- The overall theme of Enoch is that God is coming to judge the wicked and save the righteous.
  - He comes with his myriads and with his holy ones, to make judgment against all, and he will destroy all the ungodly, and convict all flesh about all works of their ungodliness which they in an ungodly way committed and the harsh words which they have spoken, and about all which the ungodly sinners have spoken evil against him. (Enoch 1:9 PSEUD-E)
  - My great holy one will go forth from his habitation, and the God of eternity will walk upon the earth, upon Mount Sinai and he will appear from his camp, and he will appear in the power of his might from the heaven of heavens. And all will be afraid and the Watchers will believe . . . (Enoch 1:3-5 PSEUD-E)
- The Book of Enoch also emphasizes that the cause of so much of the sinfulness of man is the influence and rebellion of fallen angels—who have taught men to not only build civilization but to also wage war, engage in enchantments, and astrology.

## 9 The Great Sin

- Paralleling the Bible, one of the greatest travesties of these fallen angels (sons of God) was that they entered into union with the daughters of men.
- And it came to pass that when the sons of men multiplied, in those days beautiful and fair daughters were born. And the angels, the sons of heaven, saw them and desired them, and said to one another: “Come! Let us choose for ourselves wives from people, and we will beget for ourselves children.” And Semiaza, who was their ruler, said to them: “I fear that you will not desire to do this deed, and I alone will be a debtor of a great sin.” Therefore they all answered him: “Let us swear an oath and let us all anathematize one another, not to turn away from this plan, until we should complete it and should do this deed.” (Enoch 6:1-5 PSEUD-E)
- Out of this union with the daughters of men, a human/angelic hybrid is produced called Nephilim, which Enoch refers to as giants, and the Bible refers to as heroes of old, men of renown.
- In fact, in the book of Numbers, it was fear of the Nephilim that was one of the contributing factors that caused the children of Israel to shy away from invading Canaan.

## 10 The Dispersion

- As many of you know God was grieved with making man because his heart was only on evil all the time and that he filled the earth with violence.

- So God plan to destroy the earth with a flood, but Noah found favor with God and through the building of an ark escaped the deluge.
- But after the flood, man continued to disobey God and instead of spreading over the entire earth they stayed in one place and sought to make a name for themselves.
- But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” (Gen 11:5–7 NIV)
- QUESTION, who is the “us” in the above verse?
- Doesn’t it remind you of Genesis 1:26, when God says, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, . . . (Gen 1:26 NIV)

## 11 The Divine Council

- Micaiah continued, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?’ (1 Kings 22:19–20 NIV)
- “One suggested this, and another that. (1 Kings 22:20 NIV)
- Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, ‘I will entice him.’ “‘By what means?’ the LORD asked. “‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,’ he said. (1 Kings 22:21 NIV)
- “‘You will succeed in enticing him,’ said the LORD. ‘Go and do it.’ (1 Kings 22:22 NIV)
- “So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you.” (1 Kings 22:23 NIV)
- QUESTIONS: Who makes all the decisions in heaven? To whom does God solicit ideas? Are all angelic suggestions good ideas? Why did God tell the spirit “go and do it?”

## 12 Divine Council

- One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. (Job 1:6–12 NIV)
- The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.” (Job 1:6–12 NIV)
- Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” (Job 1:6–12 NIV)

- “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.” (Job 1:6–12 NIV)
- The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. (Job 1:6–12 NIV)
- QUESTIONS: Does Satan believe that Job is a good man? According to Satan, why does Job serve God? So what is Satan implying? Why does God allow Satan to test Job?
- Therefore, through Job, God is showing himself to be good, fair, and just in His judgments.

### 13 The Song of Moses

- Moses’ farewell song in Deuteronomy 32:1–43 is one of the more intriguing portions of Deuteronomy, and has received a good deal of attention from scholars—especially verse 8.
- When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance (post Babel), when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. (Deut 32:8 NIV)
  - According to the LXX and the Dead Sea Scrolls the division of the nations is based on the number of the sons of God, not the sons of Israel.
  - This makes sense as Jacob was not born until many years later.
  - So the implication is God divided the earth according to the number of heavenly beings who already existed from the time of creation.
  - According to Genesis 10–11, the number of the nations is 70.

### 14 The Point

- The point of Deut. 32:8–9 is that, sometime after God separated the people of the earth at Babel, and established where on the earth they were to be located, he assigned each of the 70 nations to the fallen sons of God (who were also 70 in number).
- After observing humanity’s rebellion prior to the flood, and then again in the Babel incident, God decided to desist in His efforts to work directly with humanity.
- In an action reminiscent of Romans 1, God “gave humanity up” to their persistent resistance to obeying Him. God’s new approach would be to create ex nihilo a unique nation to Himself (Israel), which He originates in the very next chapter of Genesis with the call of Abraham.

- Hence each pagan nation was overseen by a divine being of inferior status to Yahweh, but Israel would be tended to by the “God of gods” and “Lord of lords” (Deut. 10:17).

## 15 The Pagan Nations

- And beware lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and worship them and serve them, things which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. (Deut. 4:19 RSV)
- When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance. (Deut. 32:8–9)

## 16 God's Model Nation

- Jeffrey H. Tigay, a 1995 winner of the Lindback Award for distinguished teaching and Emeritus A.M. Ellis Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Languages said, . . .
- [These passages] seem to reflect a biblical view that . . . as punishment for man's repeated spurning of His authority in primordial times (Gen. 3–11), God deprived mankind at large of true knowledge of Himself and ordained that it should worship idols and subordinate celestial beings . . . He selected Abraham and his descendants as the objects of His personal attention to create a model nation.

## 17 Rulers of the Air

- Then he (Gabriel) continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. (Dan 10:12–13 NIV)
- Gabriel's word to Daniel is that after he leaves, he will go and fight the prince of Persia and after him will come the high prince of Greece. (Dan 10:20)
- The implication of all of this is that the prince of Persia was a fallen angelic ruler who had jurisdiction over Persia. However, in the near future he would fall and be replaced by the prince of Greece—another angelic ruler.
- Some have suggested that Alexander the Great's success was not the result of superior human strength, ingenuity, and courage, but the help from an angelic ruler in the heavenlies.

## 18 Psalm 82

- God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the “gods”: “How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Selah
- Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.
- “They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
- “I said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.’ But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler.” Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance. (Psa 82:1–8 NIV)
- While portions of this psalm are quoted by Jesus in John 10, it seems to be primarily addressed to the angelic rulers of the nations who neglect justice and the rights of the poor and oppressed from being observed.
- Because of this the Lord will judge these fallen angelic rulers and make them mortal (die like mere men). He will also come to the earth and judge the wicked on the earth and take the nations and make them his own.

## 19 Judgment on Angels

- The Lord will judge these fallen angelic rulers (gods) because they neglected justice, righteousness, and showed favoritism.
- No doubt, they are the same ones who believed Satan’s lie and believed God was not fair, just, and good. God gave them a chance and they failed terribly.
- But now the verdict is in . . .
  - Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord; no deeds can compare with yours. (Psa 86:8 NIV)
  - The heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings? In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him. (Psa 89:5–7 NIV)
  - For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. (Psa 95:3 NIV)

## 20

- For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. (Psa 96:4 NIV)
- All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols — worship him, all you gods! (Psa 97:7 NIV)
- For you, O LORD, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods. (Psa 97:9 NIV)
- I know that the LORD is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods. (Psa 135:5 NIV)

## 21 Israel

- However, did Israel live up to their high calling?
- It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. (Rom 9:6 NIV)
- In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son." (Rom 9:8–9 NIV)
- So the true children of the promise are those who are chosen and called out the supernatural way—not by works but him who calls.
- Election is God's sovereign choice, and it doesn't depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. (Rom 9:16 NIV)

## 22 Conclusion

- His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, . . . (Eph 3:10 NIV)
- God's purpose is through the church to reveal his goodness, wisdom, and glory.
- In other words we are a specially "hand picked" people chosen by grace to come together in community to fulfill the conditions of his promises so that all creation may see the faithfulness, goodness, and love of God—putting to shame the lies of Satan.
- Yet we will be resisted.
  - For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Eph 6:12 NIV)
- Therefore let us run the race of perseverance and keep our focus to bring God glory, in order that in the coming ages [God] might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (Eph 2:7 NIV)

## 23 Let us Glorify the Lord

- The plan of Satan is to get us to doubt God's goodness and faithfulness so that we don't carry out his word and fail being a good witness because God's promises don't work in our lives.
- We bring God glory when we by faith and through our trust in him, carry out his word, so that he can fulfill his promises in us—showing that he is faithful, just, and good.
- God has special chosen us to bring Him glory.