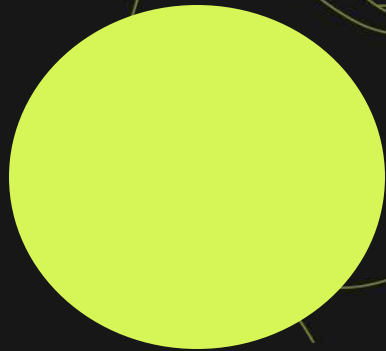


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SUPERNATURAL

SERIES: Part 2



Understanding the Origins of Good, Evil, Sin,
and Salvation in the Bible

Michael the Archangel, Guido Reni 1636



The Divine Council

*God has taken his place in the **divine council**; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment... I said, "**You are gods**, sons of the Most High, all of you;" nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince. **Psalm 82:1,6-7***

INTRODUCTION

Several biblical passages refer to something called a "Divine Council" (Psalm 82:1; Psalm 89:5-7). This Divine Council is an assembly of heavenly beings that Jehovah God appears to confer with on various matters. One Hebrew phrase often used to refer to these heavenly beings who are members of the Council is "**bene elohim**," or "**sons of God**."

THE IDEA OF A DIVINE COUNCIL IN ANCIENT PAGAN CULTURES

In ancient literature, apart from that of Israel, we know that such heavenly councils existed in pagan theology and reflected a **polytheistic (a many gods)** worldview where rival "gods" would contend among themselves for power and dominance.

In ancient Greek mythology we would call this kind of council a **pantheon**. The Egyptians, the Philistines, the ancient Syrians, the ancient Greeks, the Roman Empire, and most ancient cultures worshiped many "gods." You could say they worshiped a pantheon of gods.

FYI: Why so many polytheistic nations in the ancient world? *It's interesting that so many ancient nations came up with similar theological structures in that they support the worship of many gods. There is a very good reason why Israel was the only monotheistic religion in the ancient world, surrounded by other nations that worshiped many gods. It's not a coincidence. It's a result of the redemption story and how God dealt with both human and spiritual rebellions, especially at the Tower of Babel.*

THE DIVINE COUNCIL IN ANCIENT ISRAEL AND THE BIBLE

While the idea of a divine council was polytheistic in pagan cultures that was not the case for Israel. For Israel, the Divine Council was not a pantheon of gods competing for power. In the worldview of ancient Israel, the members of the Divine Council, though heavenly supernatural beings, were all lesser than Jehovah God.

Jehovah God is the uncreated, unequal, and unequivocal Most High God who is the creator of all things, including all the "gods" (or elohim).

No god (elohim), regardless of how much power or authority they may have been given by Jehovah God, would ever be able to contend with him. God may confer with the Divine Council, but God is always in command of the Council and all its members and makes the final decision.

WHY WOULD GOD NEED A DIVINE COUNCIL?

The short answer is that he doesn't need one any more than he needs to breath air to live. Rather, he chose to have one consisting of spiritual beings to share his rule over the heavens with them.

Remember, God didn't have to create human beings and give them dominion over his physical creation either, but he did.

Some see the Divine Council of heavenly spiritual beings with spiritual authority, as a counterpart to humans, earthly beings with authority over God's physical creation.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE DIVINE COUNCIL PLAY IN THE THREE REBELLIONS?

We see this in Genesis 3, Genesis 6, and Genesis 11 that on several occasions members of this Divine Council colluded with mankind and rebelled against God. In every case the rebellions included elohim members of the Divine Council and human beings. Their actions brought judgment from God on both the elohim (the gods) and on mankind who were also culpable.

First Rebellion in Genesis 3

Adam and Eve collude with the serpent (a divine being) to rebel against God and eat fruit from the one forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. All three are judged.

The judgment on humans includes the loss of immortality, pain, the struggle for survival, and an ongoing conflict against the serpent. Judgment against the serpent includes a prophetic declaration of his eventual demise. In other words, all parties lose immortality.

Second Rebellion in Genesis 6

A group of elohim colluded with humans in increasing wickedness on the earth. So great and deep was the spread of evil and wickedness that God judges mankind with a flood. He then judges the elohim involved, according to 2 Peter, by binding them in chains in a hell pit until the final judgment.

Third Rebellion in Genesis 11 (also see Deut. 32:7-9; Psalm 82:1-7)

The whole of humanity rebel against God by refusing to fulfill the Genesis mandate (And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it... Gen 1:28). They tell God they intend to stay together right where they are.

They also begin to build a temple (Tower of Babel) presumably to be like one of the "gods" (or like God himself). It is a rebellion that sounds like the rebellion in Genesis 3 and the rebellion of the serpent who wanted to be like God.

But there is much more to this rebellion than Genesis 11 reveals. In a few weeks you'll see how this third rebellion also became a rebellion of elohim.

The result of this multi-faceted human and divine rebellion was that every nation on earth began to follow false gods. These false gods become the principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places the New Testament speaks about (Eph. 6).

It is after this series of events that God calls Abraham to become the Father of the Nation of Israel and the Jewish people.

And it is for this cause that from this moment on, it became Israel against the nations. The fallen gods over the Gentile nations against Jehovah God who is the God of Israel.

By the time Jesus comes on the scene we begin to see that these rebellious elohim with spiritual authority over the nations have become consolidated, to some degree, under one rebellious and fallen elohim known as Satan. This is why Satan can tempt Jesus by claiming if he will only worship him, Satan will give him authority over all the Kingdoms of the earth (Luke 4:5-8).

FYI: Would a rebellious elohim be allowed to remain on the Divine Council? It seems unlikely that God would allow a rebellious elohim to remain on the Divine Council, although we cannot say that with certainty.

WHO ARE THESE ELOHIM THAT MAKE UP THE DIVINE COUNCIL?

Throughout the Bible the Hebrew phrase **elohim is repeatedly translated as “gods.”** For example, the first commandment reads... *You shall have no other gods [elohim] before [or beside] me. Exodus 20:3 (ESV)*

Why would God need to give such a command if other “gods” did not exist? And if that’s not strange enough God himself declares that he is the ones who called them elohim or “gods.”

I said, “You are gods [elohim], sons of the Most High...” Psalms 82:6

The supernatural worldview of ancient Israel and first century believers included the idea that Jehovah God is the MOST HIGH GOD (Psalm 78:35), **BUT** there were other created supernatural spiritual beings that were referred to as “gods” [elohim].

Some of these spiritual beings rebelled against God, yet they still hold real power, and some even remain in outward rebellion against God and mankind - like Satan. The Apostle Paul had various names for these fallen elohim. He called them principalities, powers, and rulers of wickedness in high places.

Yet other elohim were, and still are, in faithful service to Jehovah God – like the Archangel Michael, or Gabriel, or the Cherubim around the throne of God.

FYI: How many elohim make up the Divine Council? We cannot know with certainty if the Divine Council consists of every elohim in service to God or if God only appoints certain elohim to serve on the Council.

The term **elohim** simply refers to **a being whose natural abode is the spiritual realm** – a noncorporeal being – a spirit. Any spirit could be called an elohim, even Jehovah God.

FYI: Elohim and Jehovah God: The term elohim was not a proper name in ancient Hebrew. Eventually, however, the term Elohim (with a capital “E”) did come into use as a proper name for God, but that was not the case in ancient Israel.

Created elohim are **not EQUAL** to Jehovah God. They are created beings just as we are. But because they are spirit and superior to mortals in some ways they could seem like gods to mere mortals. For example, the Bible records men becoming fearful at the sight of angels. Angels are elohim – spirit beings, but we would not think them equal to God.

The point is that we don’t need to be afraid of the idea that there are other “gods,” as long as we understand that such “gods” are all created by the MOST HIGH GOD, subject to him, and NEVER worthy of worship.

If we strip the Bible of the reality of false “gods” because it sounds too supernatural, or superstitious or because we think it offends the MOST HIGH GOD, then we make room for the enemy, the “god of this world” to ensnare us.

For example, if I don’t believe there are evil spiritual forces [fallen elohim or “gods”] behind sin like greed, lust, hatred, unforgiveness, etc., it makes it easier to excuse those sins as just a natural human imperfection when, in fact, it can also be the result of demonic influence or bondage.

WHERE DID THE ELOHIM COME FROM?

The Bible does not directly answer this question for us, but it does give us clues. For example, in Job 38:1-7 we read...

“Where were you **when I laid the foundation of the earth**? Tell me, if you have understanding... When the morning stars sang together and all the **sons of God** [bene elohim] shouted for joy? **Job 38:4,7 (ESV)**

In this passage God is asking Job where he was when God created the earth. The implication is that Job was not around. Indeed, no human was around until God created Adam on day six. However, someone else was there and singing for joy at God's creative handiwork. **Who was it?** It appears that **the sons of God** were already in existence. It simply means that God had created a spiritual [elohim] family before he created a human one. It seems God originally intended that we would all live together in harmony in the Garden. But a series of rebellions has made that impossible for now.

THE “GODS” IN THE APOSTLE PAUL’S VIEW

*The god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel... **2 Cor. 4:4 (ESV)***

The Apostle Paul refers to Satan as the “god of this world” and unequivocally states that he has power to blind the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the truth of the Gospel. Paul is not speaking metaphorically. He is telling us that fallen elohim can still have spiritual power and influence over our world even today.

Believers in the Corinthian church were struggling with what Christianity had to say about idols, and pagan gods, and offerings to such gods. So, Paul writes to them to clarify their theology on gods and idols.

When he writes about food offered to idols in **1 Corinthians 8** Paul affirms the real existence of spiritual forces that are both evil and in direct conflict with God and mankind.

In **1 Corinthians 8:4** Paul states that the physical objects people use as idols really are nothing. He writes ***“an idol has no real existence” 1 Cor. 8:4***. This was an ancient Jewish belief as well. The physical object itself was not considered to be a god. But Paul doesn't stop there. He continues.

*For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”— yet for us there is one God.***1 Corinthians 8:5-6a (ESV)**

Paul's references to **“gods in heaven or on earth”** is a reference to **elohim**. The fact that he says “indeed there are many gods” makes it clear that he holds a traditional Jewish worldview regarding the supernatural.

The physical object an idol is made from is nothing, but the gods behind them are real, in that they are malevolent evil spiritual forces bent on the destruction of mankind and the overthrow of God himself, if it were possible.

One day, all such “gods” will be judged, and their authority over the nations of the earth will be taken away. Their demise started with the cross and the resurrection of Christ but isn't finished yet.

In the meantime, Christians must not worship idols, even though the idol is nothing, lest they open themselves up to malevolent evil spiritual forces of the unseen realm that lurk behind the idol. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul one might say...

“Yes, there is only one God. These other so-called gods are not really gods at all. But they are nonetheless real spiritual beings who are evil, who are bent on your destruction, and still have power they can use against you. So, stay away from anything that might open you up to them.”

IMPLICATIONS FOR THINGS LIKE ASTROLOGY, TAROT CARDS, PALM READING, MEDIUMS, HOROSCOPES, OCCULT PRACTICES, ETC.

Paul’s supernatural worldview has significant implications for Christians today, especially with respect to things like astrology, mediums, and various occult practices.

In **Galatians 5** Paul explicitly calls such things “works of the flesh” and warns Christians that those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Paul is not developing his theology from opinion. He is taking his cue from the teachings of God in the Old Covenant that carries forward into the New Covenant. God commanded the Israelites to avoid these things because they were connected to the pagan nations worship of false gods [fallen elohim].

Do not let your people practice fortune-telling, or use sorcery, or interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord. It is because the other nations have done these detestable things that the Lord your God will drive them out ahead of you.

Deut. 18:10-12 (NLT)

One reason why such things are forbidden among believers is that they are divinatory practices. They attempt to discern secret or hidden information about human affairs by studying celestial objects, or saying certain incantations, or even conferring with members of the spiritual world, etc.

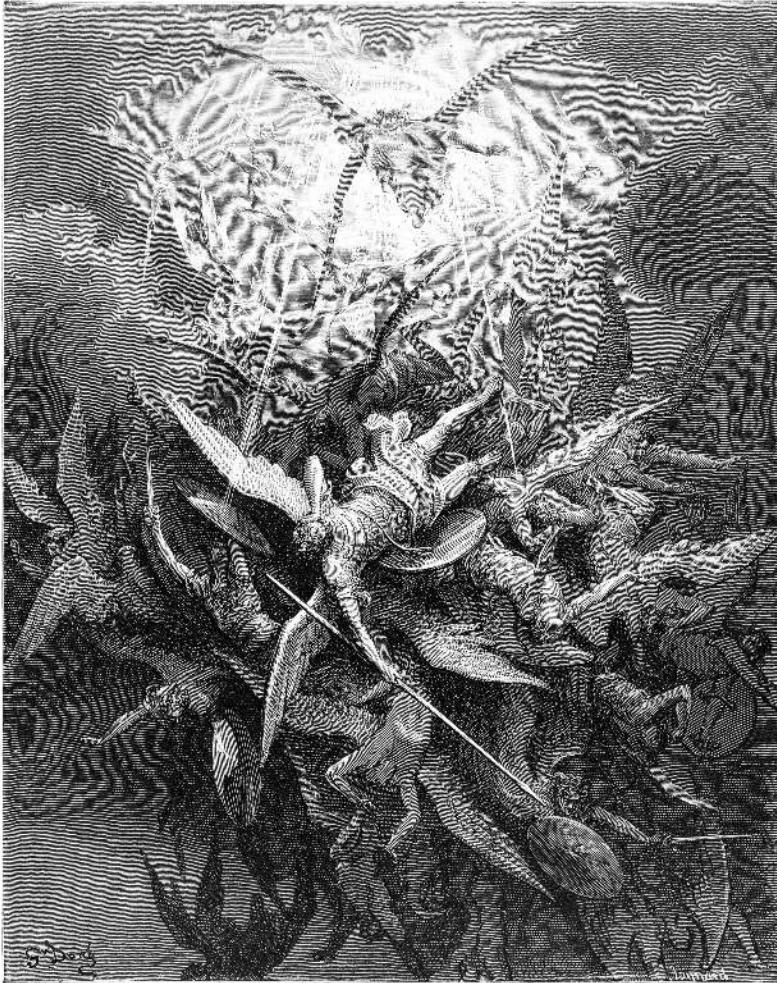
Paul's issue is that behind such practices are the influences of the fallen "gods" of the Old Covenant. In fact, many of these practices developed, and are rooted, in the ancient worship practices of these false gods.

Such practices are an attempt to acquire knowledge or help, one should not have or that God does not want one to have now, from an illegitimate source. Every time someone seeks knowledge or help from a source other than one legitimately given by God it is essentially a repeat of the rebellion in the Garden, eating from the forbidden Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Paul's point is that in some ways these practices may be nothing (like an idol), but behind them lurk malevolent spiritual forces. To dabble in them is to open yourself up to the "gods" behind them. If you are a Christian and you need divine, or secret, or hidden information, or supernatural assistance you go to the MOST HIGH GOD, not to one of his created, lesser, and malevolent elohim "gods."

If God chooses to tell or help you, then you have your answer or your help. If God chooses not to, you move ahead in confidence believing God has your "back," so to speak. That is called walking in faith.

End of Part 2



FOR FURTHER STUDY

For more detailed information on the topics presented in this study I recommend several books by various authors. Their material has been instrumental in putting this series together.

Dr. Michael Heiser, *Angels, Demons, The Unseen Realm, and Supernatural*.

John H. Walton, *The Lost World Series*, six volumes.

E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *The Assembly of the Gods*.

Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*.