

Gods, the Heavenly Council, Angels, and Demons – a Brief Look

A Study Outline

I. We have often heard it be said that we must know the enemy and his nature in order to best be able to defend against him. Such a truth applies to knowing our enemy Satan the devil, especially since he wants to utterly destroy us.

I Peter 5:8. *“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

II. It is critical to understand the nature of this powerful spiritual being and those who are allied with him, for they are truly our enemies. They also pose as “angels of light” to deceive people into thinking they are good.

Ephesians 6:11-13. *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against **principalities**, against **powers**, against the **rulers** of the **darkness** of this world, against **spiritual wickedness** in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”*

principalities (746) = *arche*, “a commencement or chief (in rank)”.

powers (1849) = *exousia*, “privilege, i.e. force, capacity, competency, freedom, mastery, or delegated influence.”

rulers (2888) = *kosmokrator*, “a world ruler”.

darkness (4655) = *skotos*, “shadiness, i.e. obscurity.”

spiritual (4152) = *pneumatikos*, “non-carnal, i.e. ethereal or spirit.”

wickedness (4189) = *poneria*, “depravity, i.e. malice, plots, sins.”

II Corinthians 11:14. *“And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”*

III. We know that Satan has several titles throughout Scripture.

A. **Dragon, old serpent, the Devil, Satan**, Revelation 20:2.

B. **Angel [messenger] of the bottomless pit, Abaddon** [Hebrew], **Apollyon** [Greek, “a destroyer”]. Revelation 9:11.

C. **Beelzebub** [954, “chief of evil spirits”]. Matthew 10:25, etc.

D. **Lucifer** [*Helel* = 1966, “brightness, morning star”], **son of the morning**. Isaiah 14:12.

E. **Anointed cherub** [*yowm* = 3117, “to be hot; a day (as the noon hours)”]. Ezekiel 28:14.

IV. There is a clear record of this Satan being an adversary to the plan of God from the very beginning of the scriptures.

A. We are introduced to Satan’s first encounter with mankind in Scripture in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 2:8-14), a well-watered place that is also identified as *Eden the garden of God* and *the mountain of God* in Ezekiel 28:13-14.

B. This place was a place where the God-beings met on occasion, or at least visited frequently, for Eve did not think it unusual when confronted by the **serpent** there. **serpent** (5175) = *nachash*, from 5172, “to hiss, i.e. whisper a (magic) spell; gen. to prognosticate”; translated “enchantment, divine, enchanter, etc.”

C. The term **nachash** is a very elastic term as used in the Hebrew, and can function as a noun,

verb, or adjective. When used as a noun it means “snake”, but when used as a verb it means “to practice divination”. As an adjective with an article *ha* attached, the word means “the diviner”. Standing alone as an adjective, *nachash* means “shining bronze” or “polished” (shiny), so by adding the article *ha* the word can mean “the shiny or luminous one. This recalls the nature of spirits as shining in their brilliance (Exodus 33:20; note also how in the presence of God Israel had to be shielded by a cloud: Exodus 13:21), flashing, as lightening (Luke 10:18), or having colors and flashing like jewels (Ezekiel 28:13). Thus, we have ...

Genesis 3:14-15. The *nachash* (shining One) is *put down to the ground* (metaphorically referenced as “eating dust” in Genesis 3:14).

Isaiah 14:11-15. *Helel* (shining One) is *brought down to Sheol* (v. 11), *cut down to the earth* (v. 12), and *thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit* (v. 15).

Ezekiel 28:16-17. The brilliant shining cherub is *cast from the mountain of God* (v. 16) and *cast to the **ground** [erets]* (v. 17).

D. All three of these scriptures have a shining supernatural being in Eden who rebelled against God, and sought to usurp the headship of God’s council and who was placed beneath the created things he vowed to rule, and sentenced to the domain of the underworld.

E. The tragedy that occurred after this rebellion is summarized by Michael Heiser as follows (Heiser, M., *Divine Council Forum*, Chapter 5, “The Worst of Times”, page 38):

“Eve was deceived and, together with Adam, plunged humanity into a sinful state. But again there is more at play here. While it is true that Helel wanted rulership of the council, there was another goal. He knew it was God’s intention to make humankind in His image, members of His divine council, and to give them authority over the earth, the place where the council met. Humans would therefore be a threat, pure and simple. The only solution was to eliminate them, but he did not dare do that himself. No, God had to make that decision — and He would make that decision if they sinned against Him. Or so Helel thought.

“Adam and Eve did sin, of course, but God reacted in a way Helel did not anticipate. He gave them another chance. While humans were driven from the Garden of Eden, they at least were not killed. Moreover, God instituted a means by which their transgressions could be atoned for. One day some descendent of Eve (Genesis 3:15) would undo the effects of their fall. Paul informs us much later that this seed or offspring was Christ (Galatians 3:15-16). The divine vice regent of Yahweh’s council would one day be born of human flesh, pay the penalty for our sin, and rise again so that we could regain our status as children of God, rulers with Him in His council over all that is .”

V. There are other indications of a “divine council” of sons of Elohim in the Old Testament. Let us look at some of these references.

A. Micaiah the prophet stated before kings Jehoshaphat of Judah and Ahab of Israel the following, in I Kings 22:19-22:

*“I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the **host** of heaven standing by him on His right hand and on His left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said, You shall persuade him, and prevail also: go forth and do so”*

host = (6635) *tsaba*, “a mass of persons or things”.

- B. Twice in Job — Job 1:6-23 and Job 2:1-6 — we see a “council” of God beings called together. These beings are called “sons of Elohim”.
1. Job 1:6. *“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them”.*
 2. Job 2:1. *“Again there was a day when the sons of Elohim came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.”*
- C. Other occurrences of the “divine council” in Job are listed below.
1. Job 15:8. *“Have you listened in the council of God? Are you the only one with wisdom?”* Here Eliphaz is suggesting that if Job had stood amidst those in the divine council he would have had the wisdom to determine why he was suffering.
 2. Job 15:15. *“Behold, He put no trust in His holy ones, and the heavenly ones are not clean in His sight”.* Some of those at the Father’s throne are not totally righteous (of Satan's cadre?), and like Satan are not trustworthy.
- D. Jacob’s encounters with the divine council are quite profound and vivid.
1. Genesis 28:12-22. *“And he [Jacob] dreamed, and behold a ladder [a ziggurat-type structure] set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven [see Revelation 21:2]; and behold the **angels of God** [malkelohim, or “angels”, not the gods or sons of Elohim] ascending and descending on it. And behold, Yahweh stood above it (verses 12-13) ... And he [Jacob] was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven [the “heavenly mountain”, as it were, the place where the council meets]” (verse 17).*
 2. Tie Genesis 28:12-22 (above) with Genesis 35:1-12. In this section of scripture there is additional information given about what really occurred during the previous meeting at this site. Here it is said that God actually appeared to Jacob (verse 1), referencing one God-figure at the top of the structure (see Genesis 28:13). The word “appeared” in Genesis 35:1 indicates that God made Himself known to Jacob and conversed with him, though the angels did no such thing. Then, in Genesis 35:7 the text should say, *because there the **gods** appeared to him, when he fled from the face of this brother.* The word translated in all Bible versions to **God** is *ha-elohim*, which can be singular or plural, but the verb (“appeared”) in this verse is plural. Thus, the correct translation here is **gods**. The implication is clear: Jacob saw and visited both the high God of Israel and also the gods of the divine council, and also viewed the angels at “heaven’s gate”.
- E. Note Psalm 89, and the “witness in the clouds”.
- Psalm 89:35-37. *“Once I swore by My **holy one** I do not lie to David; his offspring will continue forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; as the moon it will be established forever, and a witness in the clouds will be faithful. Selah”.* (Note the suggested wording by M. Tate in his book *Psalms 51 to 100*, page 425.)
- F. Psalm 82 is definitive in speaking of the “gods” in the heavenly council.
- Psalm 82:1-8. *“God [Elohim] stands in the divine assembly; He judges among the gods [Elohim]. How long will you judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid [them] out of the hand of the wicked. They (the Elohim) knew not, neither will they [the Elohim] understand ; they [the Elohim] walk on in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are out of course. I have said, you [are] gods [Elohim], and all of you [are] the sons of the most High. But you shall die like Adam, and fall like one of the Shining Ones. Arise, O God, judge the earth, for you shall inherit all nations.”*
- G. Daniel speaks of this divine council as well

Daniel 7:9-10, 13. "As I looked on thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat. His garment was like white snow, and the hair of His head was like lamb's wool. His throne was tongues of flame; its wheels were blazing fire. A river of fire streamed forth before Him; thousands upon thousands served Him, myriads upon myriads attended Him; the court sat and the books were opened I saw in the night visions, and behold One like a human being came with the clouds of heaven; He reached the Ancient of Days and was presented to Him."

Note: This last verse (13) of Daniel 7 is the very verse quoted by Jesus Christ before Caiaphas the high priest before His crucifixion (Matthew 26:64), showing that He is the One coming in the clouds of heaven, and that He was at this heavenly council before the "Ancient of Days" many centuries ago.

H. Look at Psalm 45:6-7.

Psalm 45:6-7. "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Your kingdom is a right scepter. You love righteousness and hate wickedness: therefore God, you God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows." (See Hebrews 1:8-9, where this section is quoted.)

VI. Many times the spirit beings in the heavenly council are called "sons of God", which brings one to Hebrews 1 and 2, where "angels" and "sons of God" are clearly separated.

In the Old Testament:

god (usually 430) = *elohiym*, "gods, the Supreme God, magistrates".

angel ((4397) = *malak*, "to despatch as a deputy, a messenger".

In the New Testament:

god (usually 2316) = *theos* "a deity".

angel (32) = *aggelos*, "a messenger".

A. Hebrews 1:4-6 makes clear that ...

1. Sons of God (as typified by Christ) are much **better** than angels.

better (2909) = *kreitton*, "stronger, nobler".

2. Sons of God have attained a more excellent name than angels.

3. These sons of God have been **begotten** by the Father.

begotten (1080) = *gennao*, "to procreate".

4. The angels **worship** Jesus Christ.

worship (4352) = *proskuneo*, "to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand, to fawn or crouch to, to prostrate oneself in homage".

B. Hebrews 1:8-9 is a quote from Psalm 45:6-7, which states that He, Jesus Christ, as a Son of God, was directly anointed by the Father to have a rulership forever, above those around Him.

C. Hebrews 1:10-12 states that Christ made the heavens and earth, and He will outlast them and never change.

D. Hebrews 1:13 makes it clear that angels do not have the favored position at the Father's right hand ... which position the saints, as Christ's brothers, also will have (Revelation 3:21; Psalm 132:12; Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5).

E. Hebrews 1:14. "Are they [angels] *not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*"

F. Hebrews 2:5 states that the future **world** will be subject to the sons of God, not to angels.

world (3625) = *oikoumene*, "land or globe".

G. Hebrews 2:7-9. Man, and Christ, were made flesh, and thus for a little while (until the resurrection) are inferior to the spirit status of angels.

- VII. The dark spirits against whom we battle are real, but their origin is not absolutely clear.
- A. We ought to recognize that there are many powerful spirits in the spirit realm that are called sons of God, and the “God-head” (or God-family) is not restricted to only two individuals. Thus, a correct rendition of Deuteronomy 6:4, the “Shema”, should be *“Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our Elohim: be one with Him.”* The existence of other elohim is not denied, but Israel’s Elohim is Yahweh.
 - B. It is thought that evil spirits came from the spirits of deceased **nephilim**, the descendants of the sons of God who unlawfully cohabited with human women (Genesis 6:1-4). I Enoch 15:8-12 relates the situation after the destruction of these giants.

“And now, the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, and on the earth shall be their dwelling. Evil spirits have proceeded from their bodies: because they are born from men and from the holy Watchers is their beginning and primal origin; they shall be evil spirits on earth, and evil spirits shall they be called. [As for the spirits of heaven, in heaven shall be their dwelling, but as for the spirits of the earth which were born upon the earth, on the earth shall be their dwelling]. And the spirits of the giants afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth, and cause trouble: they take no food, but nevertheless hunger and thirst, and cause offenses. And these spirits shall rise up against the children of men and against the women, because they have proceeded from them.”

 - 1. According to this source, the spirits of the deceased nephilim are the evil spirits that walk the earth, and afflict and harass humanity. The Old Testament does not tell where demons originate: it just assumes their existence.
 - 2. Jude 6 and II Peter 2:4 speak of these sons of God being imprisoned in *“chains of darkness”*.
- VIII. We as God’s people can be certain that God will never leave us to battle the evil spirits of the demonic world alone. Rather, He has given us power over the spirits of evil (Matthew 10:8), and has told us to expose evil and not fear it (Psalm 23:4). Besides, we know that through prayer (Matthew 6:13) and exercising the will of God in us we can put Satan and his demons to flight!
- A. James 4:7-8. *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts you double minded.”*
 - B. God has guaranteed that He will keep us from the evil one (John 17:15).
 - D. It is nice to know that our Creator has at His command not only angels who can be dispatched to help us in time of need, but also a whole army of countless spirit beings who are ready at a moment’s notice to carry out His will. See the attached article “The Fleet of Yhovah”.
 - C. If we have the mind of Christ we will face the devil squarely and not fall for his wily temptations. We will face the tempter as Christ did in the wilderness, and when Satan might say in the various ways he lays temptations before us, *“All these things will I give you if you will fall down and worship me”* (Matthew 4:9), we will reply, *“Get you hence, Satan, for it is written, You shall worship the Yahweh Elohim, and Him only shall you serve.”* Matthew 4:10.

Paul W. Syltie
December 14, 2007