



The Divine Council

Script References

The Spiritual Realm

00:00-00:40

Tim: For most of human history, people have believed in some kind of spiritual realm that exists alongside the world as we know it.

Jon: Right, and the biblical authors are no exception.

Tim: Yeah. For them, the spiritual realm is a different kind of realm than ours. And to highlight that difference, the Bible refers to God's space as the sky or the heavens.

Jon: Because the sky is really different from the land. It's above and beyond, and up there are shiny bodies that move around. I think of these as flaming gas balls.

Tim: But when the biblical authors looked up, the stars gave them a way to talk and think about spiritual beings. In the Bible, they're called the sons of God, or the rulers and authorities, or even sometimes the divine council.¹

1. Psalm 89:5-7;
Psalm 29:1-2;
Job 38:4-5, 7;
Job 1:6-7;
1 Kings 22:19-22;
Psalm 82:1;
Jeremiah 23:18, 23;
Job 15:7-8;
Isaiah 6:1-4, 8

The Divine Council

00:41-01:51

Jon: So that sounds really important. What does the divine council do?

Tim: Well, they're introduced in Genesis 1 where they're called the host of heaven, that is, the sun, moon, and stars. And there, they're also called signs, meaning that their power and status symbolizes and points to God's power and status.²

Jon: Yeah, so in Genesis 1, God appoints them to rule over the day and the night.

Tim: Exactly. And then later in the Bible, we're told that they were celebrating God's power and creativity when he created the world.³

Jon: Like the cheering section of a game!

2. Genesis 1:14-18,
1:26-30; Genesis 2:1

3. Job 38:6-7

Tim: Yeah! Right! There are also stories in the Bible where God invites the divine council to participate in making a decision, like when they help decide how to bring down the corrupt Israelite King Ahab,⁴ or in the book of Job where they debate God's policy of rewarding people who do good.⁵

4. 1 Kings 22:19-22

5. Job 1:6-7

Jon: So they're like God's staff team. But why does God need a team? If he's powerful enough to create the whole universe, he could surely rule it without any help.

Tim: Well, he doesn't *need* them, but apparently the God of the Bible wants to share authority with others.

Jon: Oh right. God shares his rule with human partners on the Earth, and so in the same way, there's a parallel story of God sharing his authority to rule with spiritual partners.

Twin Rebellion

01:52-03:53

Tim: Yes, that is until it all falls apart in a twin rebellion. So you have humans who want to rule on Earth on their own terms, so they start building their own nation using their own definitions of good and evil.

Jon: Yeah, the famous story of the building of Babylon.⁶

6. Genesis 11

Tim: But check this out. When biblical authors like Moses or Isaiah looked back at the origins of Babylon, they saw more than just a human rebellion but also a spiritual rebellion.⁷

7. Deuteronomy 4:16-20;
Deuteronomy 32:8-9;
Isaiah 14:11-15

Jon: What was the spiritual rebellion?

Tim: Well, there were members of the divine council who, like the humans, didn't want to represent God's authority anymore. They wanted to be God and they rebelled. And so these created beings deceived humans into worshipping them instead of the creator. And so Babylon becomes *the* biblical image for the combined human and spiritual rebellion.⁸

8. Genesis 3; Genesis 6;
Genesis 10: 1, 2-5, 6-20,
21-31; Genesis 11:1-9

Jon: And so God scatters the people from Babylon into different nations.

Tim: And in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses says this is when God also scattered the rebels of the divine council with them.⁹

9. Deuteronomy 32:8-9

Jon: So the nations are handed over to spiritual rulers.

Tim: Yes, and this is why when the biblical prophets look out at the violent empires of their day, they see two dimensions to all the chaos and injustice: human rebels who are being corrupted by the worship of spiritual rebels, the idol-gods of money, sex, and military power.

Jon: Yeah. When humans give their allegiance to these powers, it leads to a world like ours.

Tim: Right, and the best example of this is the story of the Exodus, where we're told that the Egyptian genocide of the Israelites was inspired by Pharaoh and by the gods of Egypt.

Jon: That's really intense.

Tim: But it's not the end of the story. When God rescued the Israelites from Egypt and its gods, he invited them to become his covenant partners and learn a different way of ruling the world.

Jon: And they agree to it, but in the end they don't honor the partnership. They give their allegiance to other gods.

Tim: And so this leads to their exile in Babylon, where they become slaves once again to a foreign nation and their spiritual rulers, awaiting a new exodus into freedom.

Jesus Takes Back the World From the Rebels

03:54-04:56

Tim: And this is where the story of Jesus picks up. He said he was here to rescue the world and take it back from the rebels.

Jon: Which rebels? The human ones or the spiritual ones?

Tim: Exactly. For Jesus, it was all connected. When he marched into Jerusalem for Passover, he was announcing the ultimate exodus. He was there to confront and overcome all rebel powers and authorities, and he did it by giving up his life.

Jon: So this is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said that "[Jesus] disarmed the powers and authorities ... triumphing over them by the cross."¹⁰

10. Colossians 2:15

Tim: Yes, Jesus condemned our evil by allowing the rebels to unleash all their hate and evil on him. But then he overcame it with the power of his love and resurrection life. And then Jesus told his followers that all authority in Heaven and Earth now belongs to him.

Jon: Yeah. The ultimate human and divine partner! This is really good news!

Tim: Yes! And it's why the apostles started inviting everyone to give their allegiance to the risen Jesus, to discover freedom and a new way to be human.

Humanity's Real Enemy

04:57-05:47

Jon: Now, while Jesus gained a decisive victory over the rebel powers, he didn't destroy them. They're still around causing problems.

Tim: Yes, and in fact, they are the problem. The apostles said that humanity's real enemy is never another human. Rather, it's the spiritual powers that animate our cultural idols that inspire hatred, division, and violence.¹¹

11. Ephesians 6:10-17

Jon: Ah, so when I see people hurting people, behind it is the divine council gone rogue. How do we deal with this kind of enemy?

Tim: Well, the Apostle Paul said we can resist by putting on the character traits of Jesus like armor: faithfulness, justice, and peace. And he said that our only weapon is the word of God, that is, the biblical story of good news that Jesus has overcome all rebels with the divine power of his life and love.¹²

12. Ephesians 6:13-17

Credits

06:03-06:13

Jon: You just watched a video on the divine council.

Tim: Now, there are more spiritual beings in the heavenly realm along with the divine council. They're called angels and cherubim. And that's what we're going to look at next.