

## THE UNSEEN & UNKNOWN SPIRITUAL WORLD

The Scriptures reveal an unseen but a very real presence and active spiritual world. This theme has not been well incorporated in the preaching and teaching of the present-day church. In fact as far as we can tell it is a subject never taught in Bible Colleges and Seminaries. The passages dealing with this subject are ignored or downplayed by Bible teachers, and never dealt with by present day preaching. There has always been the tendency of teaching that for centuries have kept the unseen world away from any concrete teachings except for some subject opened to clouded speculations and hesitant questions, and the subject is really of little importance to the Christian life anyway. When we consider the Gospel's portrayals of the exorcisms of Jesus dealing with the demon possession and the many references in the Old Testament to the activity of spiritual powers we should not neglect or discount their importance in Scripture.

Let's begin by noting a passage from Psalm 82 that has been variously translated and never given much attention by the commentators. We quote Psalm 82:1 from several translations: "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; He judgeth heaven's court. He pronounces judgment among the "god's" KJV. "God presides in the great assemble; He gives judgment among the "gods" NIV. "God has taken His place in the divine council; in the midst of the "gods" He holds judgment." RSV. "God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the "rulers" (marginal note: "gods") NASB. "God stands up to open heaven's court. He pronounces judgment on the *judges*. (marginal note: "gods") LIVING BIBLE. Further: verse 6: "I said, 'you are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High.'" This psalm says God is judging other gods and they are sentenced to die like humans.

Note two important things in this passage: First: There is a heavenly court, called "the congregation of the Mighty, heaven's court, the Divine council and His own congregation," over which the only God, the Almighty, presides and judges. Psalm 89 confirms this: "The heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies is comparable to the Lord? Who among the *sons of the Mighty* is like the Lord A God greatly feared among the *council of the holy ones*, and awesome above all those around Him?" (verses 5-7). The prophets knew of this council and spoke about it; Jeremiah indicates the prophets had access to the council of the Lord: "who has stood in the *council of the Lord*, that that he should see and hear His word?...But if they had stood in *My council*, then they would have announced My words to My people" (Jer. 23:18, 22). Job, one of the earliest books of the Old Testament refers to the *sons of God* shouting for joy when He laid the foundations of the world. And the *sons of God* presented themselves before the Lord, Satan also came among them (Job 38:7; 1:6, 2:7). These passages, no doubt, refer to the council of the Lord. In I Kings 22:19-23 is the record of the prophet Micaiah's message to King Jehoshaphat that gives us some insight into the council of the Lord: "Micaiah said, 'Therefore hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the *host of heaven* standing by Him on His right and on His left. The Lord said, 'Who will entice Ahab to go and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said this while another said that. Then

a *spirit* came forward and stood before the Lord and said, 'I will entice him.' The Lord said unto him, 'How?' and he said, 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then the Lord said, 'You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so.' Now therefore, the Lord has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of those your prophets; and the Lord has proclaimed disaster against you.'" This shows this world is ruled by the unseen spiritual world. This passage also shows that the court is called the *host of heaven* (ver.19) which host cannot be counted (Jer.33:22). Nehemiah 9:6 states: "Lord, You alone have made the heaven of heavens with all their *hosts*, and the heavenly *hosts* bows down before You." The Old Testament is replete with the fact that Israel was condemned for worshipping and burning offerings to the host of heaven. Joshua had an encounter with the *captain of the host of the Lord* (Joshua 5:13-15) and Daniel 8:11 refers to the *commander of the host of heaven*. Michael the archangel (Jude 9) is said to be *one of the chief princes* (Dan. 10:13) who waged war against the dragon (Satan) (Rev. 12:7-12)

We need to identify the spiritual beings who make up "*The Heavenly host*" that is the "*Council of the Lord*." Besides the *gods* seen in Psalm 82, there are the *sons God*, the *Cherub* or *Cherubim*, mentioned 93 times in the Old Testament and one time in the New Testament, the *Seraphim*, mentioned only two times, found only in Isaiah 6, *Spirits*, *Angels*, *Gabriel* "who stands in the presence of God" (Luke 1:19), *Michael*, the *archangel*, one of the chief princes (Dan. 13), the *Angels of the Lord*, mentioned throughout the Bible, and *The Elders of The Lord* (Isa. 24:23).

Second: In Psalm 82 the participants in the Heavenly court are referred to as "*gods*." This is not unusual in Scripture. The word "*gods*" is used many times to describe others rather than referring to Jehovah, the Almighty God. When the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy "because you (Jesus) being a man, make yourself out to be God, Jesus answered them, 'Has it not been written in your Law, I said you are gods'? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said 'I am the son of God.'" (John 10:34-36). In John 20:28 when Thomas said to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" Thomas was using language typical of O.T. concepts and traditions. The expression is grounded in O. T. examples showing that the word "God" can refer to one who represents God. For example: Exodus 3: 2, 6ff. Acts 7:30-33; Judges 6:11-14, 22,23, Gen. 32:24-30, Hosea 12:4. Thomas was a Jew, grounded in O.T. history and faith that God is one, Jehovah Almighty.

The Apostle Paul states: "There is no God but one, for even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ by whom are all things and we exist through him" ( I Cor. 8:4-7). The context of this passage connected with I Cor. 10:20, 21 is Paul's warning against any fellowship with demons by eating things sacrificed to idols. He quotes Deuteronomy 32:17 showing that Israel "made Him jealous with strange gods; they sacrificed to demons and not God." The implication is that Paul considered these things to be

both real and dangerous. Paul, being educated in Jewish Law was probably aware of Psalm 82 showing the reality of spiritual beings and God's court.

To further show the reality of the spiritual world we turn to II Kings 6:8-17: Elisha had angered the king of Aram and he sent horses and chariots and a great army and surrounded the city. The attendant of the man of God arose early and went out and "an army with horses and chariots were circling the city. And his servant said to him 'Alas, my master what shall we do?'" So Elisha answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' Then Elisha prayed and said, 'O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." May God open our eyes.!

Thus far we have been examining spiritual powers in general, centered upon God's heavenly court, showing the reality of the "spiritual world." There is both a dark side and bright side of the spiritual world. The dark side is Satan and his demons who rebelled against God, and the angels that sinned and are held captive until the judgement.

Let's begin with the dark side: The Serpent. The Serpent was no ordinary snake as we know snakes today. He was a divine being first introduced in the garden of Eden. There is no Biblical evidence of an angelic rebellion before creation. Some base Revelation 12:7-12 as such a war, but this war is associated with the birth of the messiah not creation – 12:7-9. He was expelled from God's council and banished "to the ground" (Ezek.14:17; Gen. 3:14) because of his rebellion in Eden. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T* defines Satan as "The prince of evil spirits, the inveterate adversary of God and of Christ, who incites apostasy from God and to sin, by demons he takes possession of the bodies of men to afflict them with diseases." The Scripture gives us several names for Satan: "Accuser, Adversary, Angel of light, Beelzebub, Belial, Deceiver and Prince of the powers of the air" to mention a few.

Demons: Quoting Thayer's again, "demons are spirits, being inferior to God, superior to men, the messengers and ministers of Satan. According to Jewish opinion which passed over to Christians, the demons are the gods of the Gentiles and authors of idolatry." The word "demon" is found only three times in the Old Testament: Lev.17:7 "They shall no longer sacrifice to the goat-demons with which they play the harlot." Deut. 17:7 "They sacrificed to demons who were not God." and Psalm 106:37: "They even sacrificed their sons and daughters to the demons." By contrast the word "demon" is used 78 times in the New Testament. However, the Bible nowhere tells us the origin of demons but Revelation 12:7-9 identifies *Satan's angels*, but gives no indication that they were "*fallen angels*" a term not used in Scripture. As we shall see, both Peter and Jude identify the fate of angels that sinned. "And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon and his *angels*. The great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the world: he was thrown down to the earth, and *his angels* were thrown down with him."

This passage in Revelation 12 should not be interpreted as a war before creation, rather the context, as we stated above, this war is associated with the messiah. "War in heaven." The word "heaven" is the Greek word *ouranos*. Translated "heaven" 218 times, "sky" 22 times, and "air" 9 times. Satan is "the prince of

the powers of the *air*" (Eph. 2:2). When then, did Satan fall from heaven. He fell during the ministry of Christ, culminating in the cross, the resurrection, the ascension of Christ. The message of the Gospels is that Satan lost his position of power and fell down to earth. "And when the seventy returned with joy, saying 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.' And he said to them, 'I was watching Satan *fall from heaven* like lightning'" (Luke 10:17, 18). The Lord said, "Now judgment is upon this world: now the ruler of this world shall be thrown out" (John 12:31). In Christ's victory Satan was defeated and Genesis 3:15 has been fulfilled.

Angels that sinned: Some might conclude that the following is a fantastical interpretation of the carnal sin of angels and their punishment, but both Peter and Jude reveal their sin, and destiny.

Genesis 6:1,2,4: "Now it came about when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose...The Nephilim (giants) were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men of old, men of renown." Jude 6, 7: "And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire." II Peter 2:4: God did not spare angels when they sinned but cast them into hell (*tartarus*) and committed them in pits of darkness reserved for judgment." When angels appear on earth they always appear as men. These "kept not their own domain but abandoned their proper abode" (Jude 6). Jude compares their sin to that of Sodom and Gomorrah: "*Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh.*" The result of this unholy alliance was "the Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were mighty men of old, men of renown" (Gen. 6:4). The logical conclusion is that the angels that sinned, spoken of by Peter and Jude, described in Genesis 6, are the "sons of God." That the title "sons of God" referred to angels in the Old Testament is seen in the book of Job. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan was among them...When the morning stars sang together, all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 1:6, 38:7). Jude writes about the same rebellion of angels as Peter and Genesis. Sometime during the time of Noah, angels "left their own habitation" and went after "strange flesh," after the daughters of men. The result? They are now "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for judgment of the great day." Before we say this is not important, consider I Corinthians 6:2, 3: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world...Do you not know that we shall judge *angels*?" The Corinthians did not know this, and neither does the average Christian in the modern church know, or have any interest in knowing, they will judge angels. The promise that the saints will share Christ's rule and judgment is one that occurs frequently in Scripture. These verses are both mind-blowing and life changing. This shows that the spiritual world and our lives are supernaturally connected.

(Continued next month: the bright side of the spiritual world)