

DIVINE COUNCIL & COSMIC CONFLICT (PSALM 82)

| SUMMER IN THE PSALMS |

INTRO

Ephesians 6:12 ESV

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Q: Who are these rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers over this present darkness... the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places?

- Further, does the spiritual realm and its entities impact and influence the physical realm and its people?
 - I would emphatically say yes it does (they do).
 - Paul is stating that our warfare is not against people, but against the spiritual forces of evil in all sorts of places and ranks.
- [Psalm 82](#) and a few other passages will help us to peel back the veil and catch a glimpse of what's happening.
 - And that the world is more than just stuff!
 - There is more going on behind the scenes (the veil) than what we could ever imagine!

Psalm 82 ESV

A PSALM OF ASAPH. ¹ God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment: ² "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah* ³ Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. ⁴ Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." ⁵ They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. ⁶ I said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; ⁷ nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince." ⁸ Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

Q: WHAT IS GOING ON?

Psalm 82:1 ESV

¹ God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:

Elohim (God) in Scripture

- **It is the most common designation for God in the OT**
 - It is the plural form of 'el' which is 'god' in singular form.
 - In reference to God - Yahweh - the plural form is described as a plural of majesty or excellence.
 - There's also an argument that the plural form here is a 'seed' for trinitarian doctrine.
 - Augustine said: The New (testament) is in the Old (testament) concealed; the Old is in the New revealed."
 - "What is hidden in the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament."
 - Elohim is used for God in [Psalm 82:1, 8](#)
- **However, it can be used to refer to entities other than God (Yahweh).**
 - Divine council members 82:1, 6
 - The gods of the nations
 - The shedim of the nations - or the demons
 - Samuel's spirit after he died and appeared to Saul.
- **So 'elohim' while used most often for God, simply means a spiritual being (or a disembodied spirit).**
 - Yahweh is an elohim
 - But no other elohim are Yahweh.
- **SIDENOTE:**
 - **It's worth noting that the OT has other words to describe particular supernatural beings:**
 - It's not simply 'angels' and 'demons' like we often think (that's an oversimplified way of looking at things).
 - Sons of God - bēnê hā'ēlōhîm
 - Holy one - qādōš
 - Cherub - kērûb - throne guardians
 - Seraph - šārāp - burning one or fiery one - sometimes pictured as flying serpents.
 - Isaiah sees them around God's throne with 6 wings, crying out Holy holy holy is the Lord of hosts!
 - Watcher - [Daniel 4:13](#)
 - Prince
 - Satan - adversary

- Messenger - mal'āk - which when translated to greek is 'angelos' and where we get our english 'angel'.
- **NT (greek) uses words like:**
 - Angel - angelos - messenger (sometimes even for human messengers)
 - Demon - daimon
 - Archangel - archangelos
 - Devil - diabolos
 - Generic terms that can speak of supernatural entities in certain contexts
 - Ruler - arche
 - Throne - thronos
 - Power - dynamis
 - Authority - exousia
- **Regarding 'elohim,' the context of the verse/scripture, helps us understand what or who is being described.**
 - Think of words like deer, fish, and sheep.
 - The context of the sentence (and its grammar) informs us of whether we're talking about one sheep or many sheep.
 - When used with singular verbs, we know the scripture is talking about God – Yahweh.
 - When used with plural verbs, we understand it to be talking about 'the gods' or 'spiritual beings'

V1: Elohim has taken his place (verb singular) in the divine council (assembly of el);

In the midst of the elohim (gods – plural context – can't stand in the midst of one) he holds judgment.

- We have a scene in heaven where God takes up court.
- We're going to see that he is acting both as prosecutor and judge against the gods (elohim) in his court.

Q: WHERE ELSE DO WE SEE THIS COUNCIL AT WORK? WHAT ROLE DO THEY PLAY IN GOD'S PLAN?

Psalms 89:5-8 ESV

⁵ Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones! ⁶ For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, ⁷ a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are

around him? ⁸ O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you?

- **Notice:**

- This council meets in the skies - the heavens.
- They are described as heavenly beings, holy ones, and the host of the Lord.
- The heavenly host are NOT like Yahweh
- They certainly cannot be men - these are heavenly beings who serve Yahweh.

Daniel 7:9-10 ESV

⁹ "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. ¹⁰ A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

- **Notice:**

- The Ancient of Days took his seat - this is the Father - Yahweh.
- He's surrounded by myriads of beings.
- It's described as his court and the books were opened.
- The following verses describe the Son of Man coming and being given dominion over all peoples, nations, and languages.

Daniel 4 describes Nebuchadnezzar's second dream and Daniel's interpretation.

- In the passage, Nebuchadnezzar sees a watcher, a holy one, come down from heaven and pronounce judgment on him for his pride.
- He was given the mind of a beast for 7 periods of time, so that he might know that the Most High rules.
- This is said to be by 'decree of the watchers' in v17.
- Later Daniel interprets this dream and declares that the judgment given IS the 'decree of the Most High' (v24)
- The implication is that Yahweh's council made a judgment against Nebuchadnezzar, and that judgment is further clarified to be God's decree.
- Better stated (as seen in our next passage too):
 - God determined that Nebuchadnezzar was guilty and needed to be judged/disciplined.
 - The watchers (council members) decided on a punishment that served Yahweh's purposes.
 - He approved and sent them to pronounce and carry it out.

1 Kings 22:19-23 ESV

¹⁹ And Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; ²⁰ and the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said one thing, and another said another. ²¹ Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will entice him.' ²² And the LORD said to him, 'By what means?' And he said, 'I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.' ²³ Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you."

- **Notice:**

- Another scene in God's throne room - his court - council.
- He's surrounded by the host of heaven.
- Yahweh has decreed that Ahab (king of Israel) must die.
- He then asks the council how it should happen.
- Notice a 'spirit' came and presented an idea - to put lies into the mouths of the false prophets.
- Micaiah the prophet declares and warns Ahab all these things.
 - Ahab refuses to listen to Yahweh and chooses to listen to the lying prophets and is subsequently killed in battle.

- **NOTE:**

- God had already judged Ahab and determined the outcome
- He permitted one of the heavenly host to put the lie in Ahab's false prophets.
- God did not originate the lie.
- This also informs us of God giving free will to his heavenly host, just like he has given to people.
- AND He uses them, like he uses us, according to our free will, but under his sovereignty.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9 ESV

⁸ When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. ⁹ But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.

- When did God divide the nations? → Babel
- He divided them according to the number of the sons of God (bene ha elohim).

Deuteronomy 4:19 ESV

¹⁹ And beware lest you raise 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 bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

- Note here that the nations have been allotted to the host of heaven.
- Further, that Israel was to have no part in that behavior.
- So the nations were disinherited at Babel... But God chose Jacob (speaking of Israel) in reference to God calling out Abraham and his offspring.

Daniel 10:13 ESV

¹³ The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia,

Daniel 10:20 ESV

²⁰ Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come.

- **Here again Daniel gives insight into the spiritual warfare raging in the heavens:**
 - The prince of Persia was resisting the heavenly being (some speculate Gabriel, but the text doesn't name him) sent to Daniel.
 - Michael one of the chief princes came to help him.
 - He goes back to fight against the prince of Persia, but behold the prince of Greece will come.
- **There are supernatural forces that are behind the raging and conflict of the nations.**
 - Spiritual warfare isn't simply a devil on your shoulder tempting you to cheat on your diet or something truly sinful.
 - That's definitely part of it.
 - But spiritual warfare occurs at the cosmic level, over nations and regions.
 - Think/Understand:
 - There seems to be a 'spirit' at times that excites or causes a nation to rage.
 - In the 60's the sexual revolution
 - In the 2010's up through last year or so... the embracing and celebrating of homosexuality and all non traditional forms of sexuality.
 - Speaking of COVID, remember all the cultural raging around COVID and racism that put so much pressure on people?
 - Deconstruction took off and many christians left the faith at this time
 - In the 1930's-40's the antisemitism that raged in Germany.
 - Present today and rising all over the world is a new wave of antisemitism.
 - What's difficult is that it takes discernment (and time) to see these things clearly.

- They are so confusing and disorienting in the moment.
 - That's what liars do (and liars) - they cause confusion and hide the truth.
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Q: WHY IS GOD EXCORIATING THEM?

Psalm 82:2-5 ESV

² "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah* ³ Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. ⁴ Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." ⁵ They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Simply put: because they have rebelled.

- They acted and ruled unjustly.
- They sided with the wicked rather than the defenseless and needy.
- At some point their rebellion led to the nations idolatry and worship of them (which God clearly forbid).

Consequently: v5 "they" walk about in darkness and the foundations of the earth are shaken.

- Both spiritual and natural realms are devastated by the rebellion.
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Q: WHAT IS THE JUDGMENT OF GOD AND WHEN DID OR WHEN WILL HIS JUDGMENT TAKE PLACE?

Psalm 82:6-8 ESV

⁶ I said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; ⁷ nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince." ⁸ Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

JUDGMENT: They are going to die like men.

Matthew 25:41 ESV

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

WHEN? Both already, but not yet!

- **V8: Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!**

- God is going to reclaim all the nations.
 - It began with the promise to Abraham in [Genesis 12](#) - that through his seed (ultimately Jesus) all nations would be blessed.
 - Pentecost was the beginning of that coming to fruition.
- ARISE: anistemi
 - LXX: its one of the two words later used in the NT for resurrection.
 - Jesus would arise, judge the earth, and take back all the nations!

Ephesians 1:20-21 ESV

²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Colossians 2:13-15 ESV

¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

- **But there is yet a future date when this will all be finalized.**

Isaiah 34:1-4 ESV

¹ Draw near, O nations, to hear, and give attention, O peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. ² For the LORD is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host; he has devoted them to destruction, has given them over for slaughter. ³ Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood. ⁴ All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.

Isaiah 24:21-23 ESV

²¹ On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth. ²² They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days they will be punished. ²³ Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders.

1 Corinthians 15:24 ESV

²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

Q: WHY IS THIS RELEVANT TO OUR LIVES TODAY?

Because we're in a fight (whether you recognize it or not) and we need to be aware and on guard:

Ephesians 6:10-18 ESV

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

LORD give us:

- Eyes that see
- Ears that hear
- Hearts that are sensitive towards you//in alignment with yours
- Minds/spirits that are discerning and understanding of the times in which we live and the war that rages.

Lastly, today's message is not to cause fear or stir up the belief that every negative thing in your life is spiritual warfare... but to remind you that there is spiritual warfare and we need to be on guard and that we need to be people of prayer. Further, we are to have compassion (not anger or bitterness) towards those who have been swept up in and caught in the devil's snare. They need Jesus... and we have him. Go give the world Jesus!