

From The Beginning The Problem with Free Will In Both Realms

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Last week we began our investigation into the supernatural roots of the scriptures by discovering a simple fact – God has a Divine Council.

We learned in Psalm 82 that He holds the members of that council accountable, and that the reality is also just as simple – the church will be replacing that council at a point in the near future.

1 Corinthians 6:1–4

“When any of you has a legal dispute with another, does he dare go to court before the unrighteous rather than before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you not competent to settle trivial suits? Do you not know that we will judge angels? Why not ordinary matters! So if you have ordinary lawsuits, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church?” (NET)

So, let’s go back to the very beginning – the creation of the universe. What or rather, who was there at the beginning. The Septuagint gives us a picture in Job.

Job 38:4–7

“Where were you when I established the earth? Just tell me, if you are capable of understanding. Who assigned its measurements, if you know? Or who was it who laid a measuring string upon it? Upon what

were its rings established? And who was it who placed a cornerstone upon it? When the stars came into being, all of my angels praised me with a great voice.” (Lexham Press 2020, Job 38:4-7)

The Septuagint captures what the rabbis involved in the translation work knew that the Hebrew pointed directly to.

Job 38:7

“When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (NASB 2020)

Sons of God here is בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים – bnei Elohim a term that Adam was also called. We see this in Messiah’s genealogy.

Luke 3:38

“the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the **son of God**.” (NASB 2020)

Several variants of the term “sons of God” refer to divine beings. The form bēnê hā’ēlōhîm (“sons of God”) appears in Job 1:6; 2:1, while the related form בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים (bēnê ’ēlōhîm, “sons of God”) appears in Job 38:7. Both of these use the word אֱלֹהִים (’ēlōhîm) for “God”; the only difference is that the former expression uses a definite article before ’ēlōhîm and the latter does not. (McGuire-Moushon 2014)

We see from Job, that as creation began, there was an audience, those direct creations of God. At the point of the creation, at the or around Genesis 1:1, there is an audience, all those direct created beings of God, the sons of God. All but Adam, he has not been created just yet.

Are they angels? Yes and no.

The unseen world has a hierarchy, something reflected in such terms as archangel versus angel. That hierarchy is sometimes difficult for us to discern in the Old Testament, since we aren’t accustomed to viewing the unseen world like a dynastic household, as an Israelite would have processed certain terms used to describe the hierarchy. In the ancient Semitic world, sons of God (Hebrew: beney elohim) is a phrase used to identify divine beings with higher-level responsibilities or jurisdictions. The term angel (Hebrew: mal’ak) describes an important but still lesser task: delivering messages. (Heiser 2015, 23-24)

So, we see here, there is a reference to a direct creation of God, we are sons and daughters of Adam, until we are saved.

John 1:12–13

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (ESV)

Galatians 3:26

“for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.” (ESV)

The phrase, “sons of God” appears in the New Testament as a name for people who are in a covenant relationship with God. This exact phrase never appears with this meaning in the Old Testament, although the idea is implied. For example, God referred to the scattered children of Israel, whom He promised to gather together again, as His sons and daughters (Is. 43:6; 45:11). The classic New Testament passage where this phrase occurs is Romans 8:12–19. The apostle Paul encouraged the Christians at Rome to live not “according to the flesh,” but “by the Spirit,” because those who “are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (v. 14). The process is described as one of adoption, by which the believer becomes a child of God, and thus an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ (Gal. 4:5; Heb. 2:10; 12:7). (Youngblood, et al. 1995)

Something else about the term “sons of God.” Both from the OT perspective as well as the NT perspective. “It’s a family term, and that’s neither coincidental nor inconsequential. God has an unseen family—in fact, it’s his original family.” (Heiser 2015, 25)

He created them and also claims them as His sons. He also created you and me, and because of our faith in Christ, He has adopted us as His children, but this is a closer relationship in that we are also joint heirs with Christ.

Romans 8:16–17

“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” (NASB 2020)

Roman Adoption

Adoption (adoptatio) and adrogation (adrogatio) both involve outsiders becoming children in another family, but the difference is in the overseeing authorities....Adrogation occurs “when persons who are their own masters deliver themselves into the control of another, and are themselves responsible for the act” (Gellius, Attic Nights, V.19.4) (Morris 2016)

The effect of adrogation was the loss of his own patria potestas on the part of the adopted, and immediate subjection to that of his adoptive father, whose legal son (iustus filius) he became. It conferred upon the adopter immediate universal succession to the property* and rights of the adopted. Seeing that, technically, adrogatio involved a certain loss of legal personality (minima capitis deminutio),† some rights vested in the adopted perished at once, e.g. any usufruct vested in him, or sworn obligation of service on the part of freedmen. In the same way, from the strictly legal point of view, all personal debts of the adopted were extinguished by his adoption (but here the praetorian equity gave his creditors the right to sell his property to the amount of their claims); if the debt was owing as a burden upon an estate to which the adopted had succeeded as heir, it was transferred with it to his adoptive father. (Hartland, et al. 1908 - 1926, 112)

So, we see that this is a term for those who are part of the Divine Council, a more global term for those created divine beings who were present at the moment of creation.

Is there a playbook of the names or titles these beings go by? Do we have some job descriptions? We turn to the Lexham Theological Wordbook again for more info.

In contemporary English terminology, this category includes “angels” and “demons.” However, many of the popular features associated with angels and demons developed after the biblical period and should not be anachronistically applied to the biblical descriptions. There are several terms used in the Bible to designate divine beings. Angels, including the Angel of Yahweh, are the most prominent category. The word “angel” comes from the Greek word ἄγγελος (angelos, “messenger”). This is the word that the Septuagint (LXX) and later the NT use to translate the Hebrew term מַלְאָךְ (mal’āk), which also means “messenger.” In the most fundamental sense, the Bible depicts these divine beings as messengers or agents working on behalf of Yahweh (Psa 103:20). However, the Bible also uses “angels” to refer to supernatural beings that do not work for Yahweh but rather have joined the devil or Satan in opposing God (Rev 12:9; compare Luke 10:17–20). In ancient Near Eastern polytheistic contexts, divine emissaries were lower-ranking gods serving the more powerful deities. This background is evident in the occasional use of אֱלֹהִים (’ēlōhîm, “gods”) with reference to supernatural beings (e.g., Psa 8:5).

The English word “demon” also derives from Greek. The NT uses δαίμων (daimōn, “demon”; Matt 8:31) and δαιμόνιον (daimonion, “demon”; Matt 9:33–34), among other terms, for evil supernatural beings, though the Graeco-Roman use of the words was neutral (i.e., supernatural but not inherently good or evil). There is no direct equivalent in Hebrew; however, the Hebrew word שֵׁד (šēd) is translated as δαιμόνιον (daimonion, “demon”) in the Septuagint (Deut 32:17). Other terms used for supernatural beings

include בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים (bēnē hā`ēlōhīm, “sons of God”; Job 1:6); קָדוֹשׁ (qādōš, “holy one”; Deut 33:2); כְּרֻב (kērūb, “cherub”; Gen 3:24); שָׂרָפ (śārāp, “seraph”; Isa 6:2); עֵיר (‘īr, “watcher”; Dan 4:13); ἀρχάγγελος (archangelos, “archangel”; 1 Thess 4:16); and διάβολος (diabolos, “devil”; Rev 12:9). In context, still more general terms like prince (שָׂר, sar; Dan 10:13), ruler (ἀρχή, archē; Col 1:16), throne (θρόνος, thronos; Col 1:16), power (δύναμις, dynamis; Eph 1:21), and authority (ἐξουσία, exousia; Col 1:16; Eph 1:21) may be used with reference to divine beings. (McGuire-Moushon 2014)

One more group to identify that the scriptures identify in Deuteronomy 32:16 and 17

Deuteronomy 32:16–17

“They (Israel) stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons (shedim) that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.” (ESV)

The word is demons in the English, in the Hebrew it is שְׂדִיִּים (sedim)

שְׂדֵי, δαιμονίους. “demon (male or female)...a spirit of the darkness.” (Koehler, et al. 1994 - 2000, 1417-1418)

Long Story Short

The verse explicitly calls the elohim that the Israelites perversely worshiped demons (shedim). This rarely used term (Deut 32:17; Psa 106:37) comes from the Akkadian shedu. In the ancient Near East, the term shedu was neutral; it could speak of a good or malevolent spirit being. These Akkadian figures were often cast as guardians or protective entities, though the term was also used to describe the life force of a person. In the context of Deuteronomy 32:17, shedim were elohim—spirit beings guarding foreign territory—who must not be worshiped. Israel was supposed to worship her own God (here, eloah; cf. Deut 29:25). One cannot deny the reality of the elohim/shedim in Deuteronomy 32:17 without denying the reality of demons. (Heiser 2015, 33)

So, we have a general idea of the makeup of the Divine Council, those who God chooses to use, but He is God, does He really need a council? For that matter, does He really need us?

He loves us and chooses to operate through us, as weak as we are. And since we are made in His image, more on that to come, we also have free will. So do the divine beings. I find myself like Gideon, God, do you have the right guy?

Judges 6:11–12

“Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor.” (ESV)

Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth.” (Lexham Press 2020, Gen 1:1)

Where do these Divine Beings created by Yahweh live? Since we are told in Genesis 1:1 that God created the heavens, does that mean these Divine Beings existed prior to the creation of an abode for them? That seems to be what Job is saying.

What we clearly see is that they had a beginning point. Divine Beings are not eternal from the perspective that they have always existed. The scripture does not tell us explicitly when they were created, but we know they were there for the show, so we are going to assume that prior to the creation of Heaven, a place for them to exist in, they did not exist.

Is there information in the scriptures to help support that?

As we have just examined, there is scripture that helps us to know who was present at creation. I see a large heavenly stadium overlooking the universe and in it are seated all those Divine Beings who had been created. How long they had been in existence we do not know.

Again, one more look at Job, the oldest book in the Bible, provides more of the scene for us as God explains it to Job.

Job 38:1–7

“And after Elihu stopped speaking, the Lord spoke to Job through a whirlwind and clouds, “Who is this who, hiding counsel from me and constraining words in his heart, thus thinks to conceal them from me? Gird your loins like a man, for I shall ask, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I established the earth? Just tell me, if you are capable of understanding. Who assigned its measurements, if you know? Or who was it who laid a measuring string upon it? Upon what were its rings established? And who was it who placed a cornerstone upon it? When the stars came into being, all of my angels praised me with a great voice.” (Lexham Press 2020, Job 38:1-7)

We see that as creation began, there was an audience, those direct creations of God. All of this to show that at the point of creation, when man was created, rebellion in the unseen realm had not yet surfaced.

Genesis 1:31

“And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” (NASB 2020)

So when did the Divine Beings that God created, who are operating as angels, cherubs, seraphs, powers, etc. fall?

There are some who postulate that there is a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 and that rebellion began at that time. That is called the Gap Theory. I am not really good at reading between the lines and coming up with the vast volumes of material that has been produced.

We do know this, prior to the creation of man, the Divine Beings had not fallen, but sometime between Genesis 1:31 and Genesis 3:1, something happened.

What is it that got some of the Divine Beings up in arms, why did they consider rebelling against their creator?

By the way, it appears that created Divine Beings who also have free will as we have, have a choice they make which once made, is a permanent choice. It appears that perhaps up to 1/3 did not choose wisely.

Genesis 1:26–28

“Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness, so they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the earth.” God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.”” (NET)

As stated before, God created these Divine Beings as well as man with free will. Did God know what He was doing – absolutely. He did not want robots, He wants us to decide for and specifically turn to Him rejecting anything else that may be offered. The same with the Divine Beings

Let’s reread Genesis 1:26 – 28 again.

Genesis 1:26–28

“Then God said, “Let **us** make humankind in **our** image, after **our likeness**, so they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the earth.” God created humankind **in his own image**, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.”” (NET)

They might suggest that the plurals refer to the Trinity, but technical research in Hebrew grammar and exegesis has shown that the Trinity is not a coherent explanation. The solution is much more straightforward, one that an ancient Israelite would have readily discerned. What we have is a single person (God) addressing a group—the members of his divine council. (Heiser 2015, 39)

The extraordinary use of the first person plural evokes the image of a heavenly court in which God is surrounded by His angelic host. Such a celestial scene is depicted in several biblical passages. This is the Israelite version of the polytheistic assemblies of the pantheon—monotheized and depaganized. It is noteworthy that this plural form of divine address is employed in Genesis on two other occasions, both involving the fate of humanity: in 3:22, in connection with the expulsion from Eden; and in 11:7, in reference to the dispersal of the human race after the building of the Tower of Babel. (Sarna 1989, 12)

- A. Said R. Judah said Rab, “When the Holy One, blessed be he, proposed to create man, he created a group of ministering angels. He said to them, ‘Shall we make man in our image?’
- B. “They said to him, ‘Lord of the ages, what sort of things will he do?’
- C. “He said to them, ‘These are the sorts of the things he will do.’
- D. “They said before him, ‘Lord of the ages, ‘What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you think of him’ (Ps. 8:5)?
- E. “He poked his little finger among them and burned them up, and so too did he do with the second group of ministering angels.
- F. “The third group said to him, ‘Lord of the ages, As to the first two groups that spoke to you, what good did they do? The whole world is yours. Whatever you want to do in your world, go and do it.’ (Neusner 2011, 189)

It is on this account that Moses says, at the creation of man alone that God said, “Let us make man,” which expression shows an assumption of other beings to himself as assistants, in order that God, the governor of all things, might have all the blameless intentions and actions of man, when he does right attributed to him; and that his other assistants might bear the imputation of his contrary actions. For it was fitting that the Father should in the eyes of his children be free from all imputation of evil; and vice and energy in accordance with vice are evil. (Philo of Alexandria 1995, 11)

So as God is creating man, He tells the council “let us make man in our image” but then God is the one who makes man. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

The preposition “in” should be understood as meaning “as” or “in the capacity of.” Humanity was created “as” the image of God. The concept can be conveyed if we think of “image” as a verb: Humans are created as God’s imagers—they function in the capacity of God’s representatives. The image of God is not a quality within human beings; it is what humans are... Every human, regardless of the stage of development, is an imager of God. There is no incremental or partial of the image via some ability, physical or spiritual. No member of the animal kingdom, regardless of any cognitive ability it might have, is an imager of God. The same goes for any intelligent life form, artificial or the hypothetical extraterrestrial. (Heiser, Image of God 2016)

But man is unique in every aspect of his existence; for not some part of man or some faculty of man, but man as such, man in his integrity, is the image of God. The biblical concept is not that the image is in man, but that man is the image of God. (Shepherd 1988, 1018)

God's intent at creation was to create man, just as He had created the divine beings, to be in His image. Divine beings in the supernatural unseen realm, us in the physical realm. As we will see, God's intent was for His imagers, humankind, male and female, to live on earth and He would live with them, and they would rule and reign with Him.

The fall did not change that as God now lives in humans through His Holy Spirit. That is part of what we read earlier in John 1:12 – 13.

John 1:12–13

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (ESV)

God's original intent was for Eden to be here on earth and His imagers, divine and human to be collocated with Him in Eden. Everything in scripture points both back to Eden and forward to the eventual establishment of the millennial reign of Christ with earth once again Eden like and then the new heavens and the new earth where we see God achieving what was His intent all along.

Genesis 2:8–17

“Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates. The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”” (NLT)

Eden was where the divine council met, the “seat of the gods” on “the mountain of God.” And the first humans were there, members of the divine council. (Gilbert 2017, Kindle Locations 258-259)

Man is in Eden, with God and the Divine Council. God creates a woman for Adam and all is good. Since Eden is where Adam and Eve are, God is there as is the Divine Council. Adam and Eve, who were there, may have had more than an occasional passing conversation with members of the Heavenly Hosts. We see in Genesis 3 that God would walk through the garden and talk to Adam and Eve.

What do we know about Eden?

Looking back at Genesis 2 we see it is a lush place, well watered.

- Ezekiel 28:13 tells us it is the garden of God.
- Ezekiel 28:14 says it is the holy mountain of God.
- It was where God was and as such was His temple.
- What we see in the Tabernacle design and the Temple design are approximations to what was in Eden.

They are all pictures of God's throne room of which we do get views of from time to time. We see the throne room in Exodus, Job, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. Also, in Revelation.

As we look at the fall we will also meet someone who was intimately familiar with the overall operations that took place at the throne of God pre-fall, the throne guardian himself, Helel ben sahar, also known as Star of the Morning, son of the dawn and, we assume, a member of the Divine Council. Let's take a look at the crime of the universe.

Genesis 3:1–24

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” So the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.” Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.” And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” (NKJV)

Next week we examine the fall in Genesis 3, Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.

Also, some problems in Genesis 6, some post flood issues in Genesis 11, and conversations with the Patriarchs or who did Jacob wrestle, really.

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