

**Divine Council and Dual Lenses:**

*Recovering a Biblical Supernatural Worldview for Theology and Apologetics*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the Divine Council Worldview (DCW) as a biblically rooted and theologically coherent framework that recovers the supernatural cosmology of Scripture. Drawing from ancient Near Eastern background texts, Second Temple Jewish literature, and canonical Scripture, the DCW affirms the existence of created spiritual beings who participate in Yahweh's governance of the cosmos. This worldview does not undermine biblical monotheism but enhances it by recognizing the role of delegated authority in the spiritual realm. Modern readers, conditioned by Enlightenment rationalism, often overlook this framework, resulting in a disenchanted reading of Scripture that diminishes both its theological richness and apologetic strength.

The paper employs a dual-lens hermeneutic—grounding Old Testament texts in their ancient context while also honoring the apostolic reinterpretation found in the New Testament. Passages such as Hosea 11:1 and Amos 9:11–12 demonstrate how New Testament writers, guided by the Holy Spirit, reframed texts beyond their historical-grammatical meaning. Through this lens, the Divine Council Worldview not only clarifies difficult passages but also offers profound insights into spiritual warfare, cosmic rebellion, and the victorious mission of Christ to reclaim the nations. This recovery of a biblical supernatural worldview invites the Church to reengage with Scripture in a way that is both theologically faithful and apologetically robust.

## I. INTRODUCTION: TWO LENSES, ONE STORY

For many modern Christians, the Bible is a spiritual guidebook read through the lens of post-Enlightenment theology, often stripped of its ancient supernatural worldview. As a result, certain biblical texts—particularly those referencing “*gods*,” “*sons of God*,” or spiritual geography—are dismissed, reinterpreted allegorically, or ignored altogether. This flattening of the biblical cosmos not only diminishes the theological depth of Scripture but also weakens its apologetic coherence in the face of skeptical inquiry.

The Divine Council Worldview (DCW) offers a corrective by reintroducing the supernatural framework shared by the biblical authors. Rooted in the ancient Near Eastern context, the DCW affirms that Yahweh, while utterly unique, sovereign, and possessing aseity—existence in and of Himself—is enthroned above a council of created spiritual beings (elohim) who participate in His governance of the world. The term elohim, often translated “*god*,” is not a proper name but an appellative, much like “*mom*” or “*king*”—it describes a category of being, not a specific identity. Just as multiple people may be called “*mom*,” but only one is your mother, so too many beings may be called elohim, but only Yahweh is uncreated, all-powerful, and supreme among them. This worldview is not confined to obscure texts; it appears throughout the Old Testament in passages such as Psalm 82 and Deuteronomy 32:8–9, finds expansion in Second Temple Jewish literature, and continues into New Testament writings that speak of “*principalities*,” “*powers*,” and “*rulers in heavenly places*.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 11–15.

However, understanding the DCW requires a nuanced hermeneutic. As Michael Heiser has observed, many Christians read the Old Testament exclusively through a New Testament lens, assuming that all meaning must be filtered through Christological fulfillment. Yet this approach can obscure the original intent of the biblical authors and lead to theological distortions.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, reading the Old Testament only through its ancient context without the illumination of apostolic revelation fails to grasp the full redemptive arc of Scripture. What is needed is a dual-lens hermeneutic—one lens grounded in the cultural and theological world of the ancient authors, and the other shaped by the Spirit-led insights of the New Testament writers.

This tension is evident in the way New Testament authors repurpose Old Testament texts. Passages that originally referred to historical events or national restoration are often applied to Jesus or the inclusion of the Gentiles.<sup>3</sup> These uses may appear unexpected when viewed strictly through a grammatical-historical lens, but they reflect a theological elasticity under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Such reinterpretations do not dismiss the original context but reveal deeper layers of meaning consistent with God’s unfolding redemptive plan.

This paper contends that recovering the Divine Council Worldview through this dual-lens approach yields a more theologically faithful and apologetically effective understanding of Scripture. By tracing its roots, development, and implications, we will show that the DCW offers not only explanatory power for difficult texts but also a

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 17–19.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 2:15, cf. Hosea 11:1; Acts 15:16–17, cf. Amos 9:11–12 LXX

framework for engaging the modern world with the full force of the Bible’s supernatural message.

## II. THE MODERN CRISIS: LOSS OF THE SUPERNATURAL WORLDVIEW

The Western church today largely interprets Scripture through the lens of Enlightenment rationalism. While modernism brought benefits in science, logic, and methodology, it also trained generations of Bible readers to reject or overlook the supernatural elements embedded in the biblical narrative. In this flattened worldview, references to spiritual beings—such as angels, demons, or the “*gods*” of the nations—are often interpreted symbolically, psychologized, or explained away as ancient superstition.<sup>4</sup> This trend has effectively stripped the biblical story of its cosmic drama, reducing it to moral lessons or theological abstractions divorced from the realm of spiritual conflict.

The consequences are not merely academic. When Christians are unaware of the Bible’s own supernatural framework, they become vulnerable to false dichotomies between the material and spiritual realms.<sup>5</sup> This affects their theology of prayer, divine intervention, missions, and even their understanding of evil. Without categories like the Divine Council, many cannot explain passages such as Psalm 82, Daniel 10, or Ephesians 6 without reducing them to metaphor. This undermines confidence in Scripture’s coherence and opens the door for skeptical objections.

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<sup>4</sup> Peter S. Williams, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 32–34.

<sup>5</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Supernatural: What the Bible Teaches About the Unseen World and Why It Matters* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 10–13.

This rationalistic approach also erodes apologetic credibility. Skeptics often point to biblical references to “*other gods*” or cosmic battles as proof that the Bible is primitive or mythological. When Christians are unprepared to answer these objections with an informed theological framework, the faith appears fragmented, incoherent, or shallow.<sup>6</sup> Yet when the supernatural worldview of the biblical authors is recovered, these “*problem texts*” often become apologetic strengths—showing the Bible’s internal consistency and cultural intelligence within the ancient world.

Ultimately, the crisis is not that the Bible lacks clarity—it is that many have not been taught to read it as its original authors intended. The Divine Council Worldview helps restore the missing dimension of cosmic reality that frames the biblical story from Genesis to Revelation.

### III. THE ANCIENT CONTEXT OF THE DIVINE COUNCIL

The idea that Yahweh presides over a heavenly council of divine beings may seem foreign—or even heretical—to many modern Christians, but it was a familiar concept to ancient Israel and its neighbors. In the ancient Near East, it was common for a supreme deity to rule over a divine council or pantheon of lesser spiritual beings. Ugaritic texts—discovered at Ras Shamra (modern-day Syria) and dating to the 14th–12th centuries BCE—are especially important for understanding this background.<sup>7</sup> They describe El as the high god who presides over an assembly of divine beings, including

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<sup>6</sup> John Walton and J. Harvey Walton, *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology: Reading the Bible in the Context of the Ancient Near East* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 5–8.

<sup>7</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 41–43

Baal and other deities. The structure and language of these texts offer valuable parallels to biblical passages such as Psalm 82 and 1 Kings 22, where Yahweh is portrayed in a similar role: as enthroned above a divine assembly.<sup>8</sup>

These texts help illuminate the cultural and linguistic context in which the Hebrew Bible was written. For example, the term *elohim* and the council imagery do not originate in pagan mythology but reflect a broader Northwest Semitic worldview, which the biblical authors redeploy to affirm Yahweh's incomparability rather than to endorse polytheism. Israel's theology did not deny the existence of other spiritual beings—what Scripture calls *elohim*—but it refused to equate them with Yahweh, who alone is uncreated, sovereign, and worthy of worship.

As for the term *El*, scholars generally do not consider it a “*loanword*” in the usual sense. Rather, “*El*” is a shared root across Northwest Semitic languages (including Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Phoenician) that originally referred to a generic “*god*” and later became associated with specific deities, including the high god *El* in Ugaritic texts and the biblical usage of *El* or *Elohim*. Thus, the biblical authors employed familiar terms from their cultural-linguistic environment, but redefined and reoriented them to reflect Israel's radical monotheism.

This Divine Council appears throughout the Old Testament. In Psalm 82, God stands in the divine assembly and pronounces judgment on other *elohim*, condemning them for their injustice and declaring their eventual death “*like any prince.*” The text clearly differentiates between Yahweh and these subordinate beings,<sup>9</sup> yet refers to them

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<sup>8</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 29–32.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–27.

using the same Hebrew term, *elohim*, which simply denotes a member of the spiritual realm. That these are not human judges is confirmed in Psalm 89:5–7,<sup>10</sup> where the “*holy ones*” are located “*in the skies*” and God is described as being feared “*in the council of the holy ones*”—a gathering explicitly set in the heavenly realm. Likewise, Deuteronomy 32:8–9—especially in the Septuagint<sup>11</sup> and Dead Sea Scrolls readings<sup>12</sup>—teaches that when God divided the nations at Babel, He appointed them according to the number of the “*sons of God*,” reserving Israel as His special portion.<sup>13</sup>

Other passages affirm a similar cosmic structure. In Job 1–2, the “*sons of God*” present themselves before Yahweh, and the Satan (*haśśātān*) enters among them to function as an accuser. The grammar makes clear this is not yet a proper name, but a role or office within the divine council.

In 1 Kings 22, the prophet Micaiah is given a vision of Yahweh seated on His throne with the “*host of heaven*” gathered around Him, deliberating how to bring judgment upon King Ahab.<sup>14</sup> In this scene, Yahweh invites proposals from the council members, listens to various suggestions, and ultimately approves one spirit’s plan to entice Ahab through deception. The decision is not unilateral but participatory—offering

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<sup>10</sup> Psalm 89:5–7 [Heb. vv. 6–8]. The text describes God as being “greatly feared in the council of the holy ones” (*sōd qēdōšīm*) and “more awesome than all who are around him.” These “holy ones” are located “in the skies” (*baśśāḥaq*), making it clear that this refers to a divine assembly in the heavenly realm, not an earthly gathering of human judges.

<sup>11</sup> Septuagint, Deuteronomy 32:8, in *Septuaginta: With Morphology*, electronic ed., Rahlfs Edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>12</sup> Deuteronomy 32:8; 4QDeuteronomy<sub>j</sub> (4Q37), Col. XII, Deuteronomy 32:7–8, in *Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls: Bible Reference Index* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2011), Dt 32:8.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick D. Miller, “Cosmology and World Order in the Old Testament: The Divine Council as a Sign of Pluralism in Israelite Theology,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 9, no. 2 (1987): 53–78.

<sup>14</sup> John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 288–291.



a striking example of the divine council functioning in real-time. These are not metaphors but glimpses into a spiritual bureaucracy where Yahweh reigns supreme while permitting real participation from other spiritual beings. The council imagery mirrors ancient kingship structures, not as mythological borrowing, but as divine condescension—God accommodating human categories to reveal heavenly realities.<sup>15</sup>

Second Temple Jewish literature further reinforces the DCW. These writings fill in the theological gaps between the Old and New Testaments and show that the idea of a populated spiritual realm remained central to Jewish thought before and during the time of Christ.<sup>16</sup>

Far from undermining monotheism, the Divine Council worldview magnifies the sovereignty of Yahweh by portraying Him as God Most High (El Elyon), enthroned above all other beings, whether loyal or rebellious. In this context, biblical monotheism reflects what scholars call monolatry. Monolatry refers to the exclusive worship of one deity while accepting the existence of others. In contrast to polytheism (which worships many gods) or modern monotheism (which often denies the existence of any other supernatural beings), biblical monolatry affirms that while other spiritual beings exist (elohim), only Yahweh is to be worshiped.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 42–45.

<sup>16</sup> Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 145–149.

<sup>17</sup> Nathan MacDonald, “Monotheism and the Language of Divine Agency in the Hebrew Bible,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 43, no. 3 (2013): 127–136.

#### IV. THE ANCIENT CONTEXT OF THE DIVINE COUNCIL

The idea that Yahweh presides over a divine council may seem foreign to modern readers, but it was well understood within the cultural and religious landscape of the ancient Near East. In the literature of surrounding nations—particularly Ugarit—we find consistent references to high gods ruling over divine assemblies. El, the chief deity in the Ugaritic pantheon, was depicted as a king who governed a divine court made up of subordinate deities who carried out his decrees.<sup>18</sup>

This pattern of cosmic administration reflects a wider conceptual framework common in the ancient world and provides essential context for understanding the biblical depiction of Yahweh’s heavenly court. While some argue that humans construct images of gods and divine order based on their own societal structures, it is equally possible—and biblically plausible—that human institutions reflect a pre-existing heavenly order. In other words, we do not merely project hierarchy onto the heavens; we may be organizing our world in response to patterns embedded in the unseen realm. Scripture frequently affirms this by depicting God’s heavenly court using language drawn from royal courts and governance, not as accommodation to myth, but as revelation of a real spiritual structure that human societies faintly echo.<sup>19</sup>

The Hebrew Bible affirms this structure while simultaneously redefining it. Yahweh is not merely a high god among equals but the unique, uncreated, and sovereign

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<sup>18</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 41–44.

<sup>19</sup> See Exodus 25:9, 40; Hebrews 8:5; Matthew 6:10. See also N. T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus’s Crucifixion* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2016), 203–204; and G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 15–18.

God over all creation. Nevertheless, He is portrayed as engaging with a divine council of created spiritual beings—sometimes called “*sons of God*” (bene elohim)—who participate in the administration of the cosmos.<sup>20</sup> In this way, biblical theology retains the form of the divine council but radically transforms its content, affirming monotheism while acknowledging the existence of other spiritual entities.

Key Old Testament passages explicitly portray this divine assembly. In Psalm 82, God stands in the midst of the divine council and passes judgment upon the other elohim, condemning their injustice among the nations.<sup>21</sup> In Deuteronomy 32:8–9, the nations are divided according to the number of the “*sons of God*,” and Yahweh retains Israel as His unique inheritance.<sup>22</sup> Although the Masoretic Text reads “*sons of Israel*,” this reading is problematic—Israel did not yet exist at the time of the Tower of Babel described in Genesis 11. In contrast, the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls preserve the older and more theologically coherent reading: “*sons of God*.”<sup>23</sup> This reflects a supernatural worldview in which the nations are placed under the authority of lesser divine beings, while Yahweh chooses Israel for Himself.

Other passages include Job 1–2, where the “*sons of God*” present themselves before Yahweh in what is clearly a courtroom setting, and 1 Kings 22, where the prophet Micaiah describes a heavenly scene in which spiritual beings debate how to entice Ahab

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<sup>20</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 23–25.

<sup>21</sup> Psalm 82:1–8.

<sup>22</sup> Deuteronomy 32:8–9.

<sup>23</sup> Job 1:6; Job 2:1; 1 Kings 22:19–23.

to his death.<sup>24</sup> These episodes suggest not only the existence of other elohim, but also their real participation in heavenly deliberation—though always under Yahweh’s sovereign authority.

Another striking example of divine council activity appears in Daniel 4:17, where the judgment against Nebuchadnezzar is declared as coming not directly from God, but from “*the watchers*” and “*the holy ones*.” The text reads: “*The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men*” (Dan. 4:17, ESV). This passage is significant because it attributes judicial authority to spiritual beings within the divine court, showing that they not only observe but also participate in rendering decisions that affect the earthly realm. The statement underscores that while Yahweh remains the ultimate sovereign, He allows these heavenly agents to exercise real authority in the execution of His will. This judicial decision, issued by the holy ones and affirmed by God, reinforces the reality of the divine council as a functional governing body, not merely symbolic or poetic language.

During the Second Temple period, Jewish literature continued to develop this Divine Council framework. Texts such as 1 Enoch, Jubilees, the LXX, and fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls depict a highly structured supernatural realm, including angelic hierarchies, rebellious Watchers, and spiritual geography.<sup>25</sup> While these writings

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<sup>24</sup> Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 299–301.

<sup>25</sup> Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Giants from Qumran: Texts, Translation, and Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 12–14.

are not canonical in Protestant traditions, they reflect a worldview that was widespread among Jews in the time of Jesus and the apostles.

The term *elohim* is used in Scripture to refer to various non-human<sup>26</sup> spiritual beings—including Yahweh (Psalm 82:1), the “*gods*” of the nations (Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 96:5), spirits of the dead (1 Samuel 28:13), and angels (Psalm 8:5; cf. Hebrews 2:7)—not because they are equal in nature, but because they inhabit the same category of non-embodied spiritual entities.

This ancient supernatural cosmology forms the necessary backdrop for understanding many difficult or overlooked passages in the Old and New Testaments. Without it, modern readers are likely to impose their own flattened metaphysics onto Scripture and miss the broader theological drama that spans heaven and earth.

## V. THE DUAL-LENS HERMENEUTIC: ANCIENT CONTEXT AND APOSTOLIC REVELATION

To interpret the Bible faithfully, one must read it through a dual-lens hermeneutic.<sup>27</sup> The first lens must come first: it allows readers to engage the text as the original audience would have understood it—rooted in ancient Near Eastern language, imagery, and cosmology. Without this grounding, later interpretations risk becoming detached from the meaning the text originally conveyed. The second lens is shaped by the apostolic witness of the New Testament, where Old Testament passages are often reinterpreted under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ as the fulfillment of

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<sup>26</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, 28–30.

<sup>27</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Bible Unfiltered: Approaching Scripture on Its Own Terms* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 89–91.

God’s redemptive plan. This approach does not flatten the text into a single layer but recognizes Scripture’s unfolding complexity: where you are going depends on knowing where you’ve been.

Neglecting either lens leads to serious interpretive errors. Focusing solely on the New Testament can cause readers to anachronistically impose theological categories onto the Old Testament that did not exist in the minds of its authors. Conversely, focusing only on ancient context can cause interpreters to miss the canonical unity of Scripture and the theological telos of the gospel. The Divine Council Worldview sits at the intersection of these lenses—it is deeply rooted in the Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish thought, yet it is also reshaped and fulfilled in the New Testament’s Christocentric narrative.

Several key texts illustrate this dual-lens approach. For instance, Hosea 11:1 says, “*Out of Egypt I called my son,*” referring historically to Israel’s Exodus. However, in Matthew 2:15, this verse is applied directly to Jesus’ return from Egypt.<sup>28</sup> The original passage was not a predictive prophecy in the traditional sense, yet under the Spirit’s guidance, Matthew sees a typological connection between Israel and Jesus, the true Son of God who recapitulates Israel’s story.

A second example appears in Amos 9:11–12, which proclaims that the “*booth of David*” will be rebuilt, and that Israel will “*possess the remnant of Edom.*” In the Masoretic Text, this is a geopolitical promise of Israel’s future dominance over a historic enemy. Yet in Acts 15:16–17, James quotes the Septuagint version of Amos, which reads “*the remnant of mankind*” instead of “*Edom,*” and applies it to the inclusion of Gentiles

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<sup>28</sup> Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15.

into the people of God.<sup>29</sup> Here, the shift from a nationalistic restoration to a universal, Spirit-led inclusion of the nations demonstrates how the apostles read the Old Testament through the lens of Christ's cosmic reign.

This approach does not undermine the original meaning of the Old Testament but rather expands and reconfigures it under divine inspiration. The apostolic method of interpretation is not confined to grammatical-historical exegesis; it incorporates typology, reapplication, and what may be termed Spirit-guided theological consolidation and conceptual amalgamation.<sup>30</sup> This means that earlier themes, categories, and figures are often merged, clarified, or reinterpreted in light of Christ and the unfolding plan of redemption. It is for this reason that New Testament authors frequently draw upon language from the Psalms, Prophets, and Torah in ways that may seem surprising—or even discordant—to modern readers trained in post-Enlightenment literalism.

The implications for theology and apologetics are profound. When skeptics challenge the New Testament's use of the Old—accusing it of twisting texts or ignoring context—they often reveal not only a misunderstanding of biblical theology, but also a lack of familiarity with Second Temple Jewish interpretive traditions and the unique authority of inspired apostolic exegesis. By adopting a dual-lens hermeneutic—rooted in both ancient context and apostolic fulfillment—and attuned to the *sensus plenior*,

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<sup>29</sup> Amos 9:11–12 LXX; Acts 15:16–17. See also Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Amos 9:12.

<sup>30</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 4–6.

Christians are better equipped to defend the coherence of Scripture while also recognizing the theological logic that governs its canon-wide development.<sup>31</sup>

## VI. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE DIVINE COUNCIL

The Divine Council Worldview is not limited to isolated verses or obscure traditions. It runs like a hidden thread through the entire biblical narrative—from creation and rebellion to redemption and restoration. To fully appreciate its scope, one must trace its development across both Testaments, recognizing its theological coherence and its role in the overarching cosmic drama.

At the heart of the DCW is the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview, a phrase popularized by Heiser to summarize the theological implications of that key passage. In Deuteronomy 32:8–9, we read that when the Most High divided the nations, “*he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.*”<sup>32</sup> This verse reveals a supernatural dimension to the aftermath of Babel (Genesis 11): Yahweh disinherited the nations and allotted them to lesser elohim while choosing Israel as His own.

This divine disinheritance follows a pattern of cosmic rebellion. The serpent in Eden represents the first insurrection, introducing sin and death into the human realm.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Theological Consolidation refers to the apostolic practice of unifying diverse theological ideas—such as fragmented views of evil or divine agency—into a more developed framework centered on Christ. Conceptual Amalgamation describes the inspired synthesis of multiple biblical categories or figures, such as the merging of serpentine, rebellious, and prosecutorial entities into the singular adversary known as Satan. See also, D. Gene Williams Jr., *Tracing Satan’s Development*, accessed March 2025, <https://trinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Deuteronomy 32:8–9 (LXX); cf. Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 113–15

<sup>33</sup> Genesis 3:1–15. See also Gregory K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 24–26.



Genesis 6:1–4 records a second rebellion—commonly associated with the Watchers in 1 Enoch—where “*sons of God*” cohabit with human women, producing the Nephilim. This event, though cryptic, introduces a deep corruption into the world and is seen by later Jewish literature as a source of demonic influence.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the rebellion at Babel results not only in linguistic division but also in spiritual division, as the nations are placed under lesser powers, while Yahweh calls Abraham to initiate a plan of global redemption.

Throughout the Old Testament, we see glimpses of this spiritual structure. Daniel 10 describes the “*prince of Persia*” and “*prince of Greece*” as hostile spiritual beings opposing God’s messenger.<sup>35</sup> These princes are not mere metaphors for empires—they represent territorial spiritual authorities aligned against Yahweh’s purposes. Likewise, passages in the Psalms speak of Yahweh judging “*the gods*” (Psalm 82), while others describe God rising in the divine assembly (Psalm 89:5–7).

The New Testament does not abandon this framework but builds upon it with Christ as the victorious divine Son who reclaims the nations. Jesus is not merely a moral teacher or sacrificial lamb—He is the cosmic King who confronts the powers. In Colossians 2:15, Paul declares that Christ “*disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame.*”<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Ephesians 6:12 reminds believers that their battle is “*not against flesh and blood, but against rulers... spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *1 Enoch* 6–16; cf. James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 15–36.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel 10:12–13, 20–21.

<sup>36</sup> Colossians 2:15.

<sup>37</sup> Ephesians 6:12.

Pentecost (Acts 2) must also be read in light of the Divine Council worldview. As the nations gather in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit reverses Babel by empowering the apostles to speak in the languages of the disinherited nations.<sup>38</sup> This is no coincidence; it signals that Yahweh, through Christ, has begun reclaiming the nations under His rightful rule. The mission of the Church is thus not merely evangelistic but cosmic—it announces to the principalities and powers that their authority has been broken and that a new King reigns.

In this way, the DCW provides not only a coherent theology of spiritual beings but also a powerful framework for understanding redemption as a global and supernatural restoration. It links the ancient rebellions to the gospel's victory, casting Christ's work in cosmic terms that resonate throughout Scripture.

## **VII. THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE DIVINE COUNCIL**

The Divine Council Worldview is not merely an academic or exegetical curiosity; it reshapes several core areas of systematic theology. From the doctrine of God and angelology to Christology and ecclesiology, the DCW contributes to a fuller, more biblically integrated vision of God's cosmic purposes. By restoring this supernatural framework, theologians and apologists gain new resources for articulating the depth of biblical revelation and the coherence of God's redemptive plan.

First, the Divine Council Worldview reinforces God's transcendence and sovereignty without collapsing His rule into exhaustive micromanagement. Yahweh

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<sup>38</sup> Acts 2:1–11. See also Michael Heiser, *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, the Watchers, and the Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ* (Crane, MO: Defender Publishing, 2017), 84–86.

delegates real authority to both spiritual and human agents, though He retains the right and power to override their decisions.<sup>39</sup> This is not theoretical; Scripture records moments where judgment is issued not directly by God, but by His divine council. For example, Psalm 82:1 places God “*in the midst of the gods*” and then records their judgment of the nations as unjust, showing that these elohim had real judicial responsibility—even if they ultimately failed.<sup>40</sup> This distribution of authority mirrors the pattern seen in creation: Adam is given dominion over the earth, Israel is chosen to represent Yahweh among the nations, and even rebellious divine beings are held accountable to His justice. The council model demonstrates that God governs through partnership rather than coercion, a pattern fulfilled in Christ and extended to the Church.

Second, the Divine Council Worldview provides a theological framework for understanding the origin and persistence of evil. Rather than viewing evil solely as the result of human sin, Scripture presents a multi-layered rebellion involving both human and divine agents.<sup>41</sup> Genesis 3 (the serpent), Genesis 6 (the Watchers), and Genesis 11 (the nations) form a triad of cosmic fractures. The presence of intelligent, malevolent spiritual beings explains much of the chaos in the biblical world—not as products of dualism, but as distortions of God’s good creation by free moral agents.

Biblically and theologically, evil is not a created substance or competing force, but a privation of good—a corruption of what was originally whole. As Augustine

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<sup>39</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 45–47.

<sup>40</sup> Psalm 82; cf. Deuteronomy 32:8–9.

<sup>41</sup> Brian Godawa, *The Dragon King: First Emperor of China*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Embedded Pictures Publishing, 2014), appendix 2, “Three Rebellions.”

argued, evil has no existence in itself; it is a parasite on the good.<sup>42</sup> A tree can be fully healthy, but it cannot be fully rotten—because rot is a degradation of something that once lived. In this way, good can exist without evil, but evil cannot exist without good. This sharply contrasts with dualistic worldviews like Yin-Yang, which portray good and evil as equal and necessary opposites. The Bible rejects this. No one commits evil for its own sake; rather, they pursue what they perceive to be good—even if it is only good for themselves. Evil, then, is a disordered desire and a misuse of freedom, whether in human or divine beings.

Third, the Divine Council framework enhances Christology by situating Jesus not only as the atoning sacrifice but also as the victorious King who defeats the spiritual rulers of this age.<sup>43</sup> Jesus confronts demonic powers throughout His ministry (e.g., Mark 1:23–26), binds the strong man (Mark 3:27), and triumphs at the cross (Col 2:15). When Paul declares that the risen Christ is seated “*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion*” (Eph 1:21), he is echoing the language of the divine council, now reoriented around the enthroned Messiah.<sup>44</sup>

Fourth, the DCW informs ecclesiology by reframing the Church’s identity as a supernatural community participating in God’s cosmic mission. The Church is not merely a gathering of believers, but an eschatological body called to reclaim territory once ruled by fallen powers.<sup>45</sup> Evangelism and discipleship are acts of spiritual war; baptism is not

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<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 124–26 (Book VII, sections 12–13).

<sup>43</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*, 213–215.

<sup>44</sup> Ephesians 1:21; cf. Philippians 2:9–11.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Leithart, *Delivered from the Elements of the World: Atonement, Justification, Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 252–254.

only symbolic death and resurrection but a declaration of allegiance in the cosmic conflict.<sup>46</sup> The Church proclaims, through word and sacrament, that the rule of the rebellious sons of God is ending, and that all authority belongs to the risen Christ.

Finally, this worldview expands missiology beyond cultural or geographic boundaries. When Paul speaks of bringing the gospel “*to the Gentiles*,” he is not just crossing sociological lines—he is reclaiming the disinherited nations from hostile powers.<sup>47</sup> The Great Commission is not simply about personal salvation; it is Yahweh reclaiming His cosmic inheritance through the exalted Son.<sup>b</sup>

Thus, the theological implications of the Divine Council Worldview are not abstract—they are profoundly practical, shaping how we view God, evil, salvation, the Church, and the mission of Christ in the world.

## VIII. APOLOGETIC VALUE OF THE DIVINE COUNCIL WORLDVIEW

While often neglected in contemporary apologetics, the Divine Council Worldview holds immense value for defending the coherence, integrity, and supernatural depth of Scripture. It addresses frequent objections raised by skeptics, explains difficult biblical texts, and reconnects modern readers with the worldview of the biblical authors. In recovering the DCW, Christian apologists gain a richer framework for confronting naturalism and theological reductionism, both inside and outside the Church.

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<sup>46</sup> Romans 6:3–5; Colossians 2:12. See also D. Gene Williams Jr., *Baptism in Biblical Theology: A Typological, Covenantal, and Linguistic Examination*, accessed March 2025, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Acts 26:17–18; cf. Matthew 28:18–20

A recurring objection against the Old Testament is that it appears to affirm the existence of multiple gods. Verses like Psalm 82:1— “*God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods, he holds judgment*”—are cited as evidence that biblical monotheism evolved from earlier polytheism.<sup>48</sup> When Christian readers are unaware of the DCW, they often respond by either downplaying the text’s supernaturalism or reinterpreting “*gods*” as human rulers.<sup>49</sup> However, the Divine Council Worldview provides a coherent and faithful answer: the term *elohim* in Hebrew refers not to divine essence or species, but to a mode of existence or space of residence—the unseen realm.<sup>50</sup> Yahweh’s uniqueness is ontological: He alone possesses aseity, and His status as *elohim* is not one among many but of an entirely different order of being. Whereas other *elohim* inhabit the spiritual realm as created beings, Yahweh is the source of all being, occupying the same realm but sharing it with no equal.<sup>51</sup>

Heiser has described this as Yahweh being “*species unique*,” a helpful shorthand to express His incomparability within the category of *elohim*—but the distinction is ultimately more than taxonomic; it is metaphysical.

Understanding this distinction allows apologists to affirm the integrity of Scripture without resorting to strained harmonization. The presence of other *elohim* is not a threat to biblical monotheism—it is a reaffirmation of Yahweh’s supremacy over a real

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<sup>48</sup> Psalm 82:1.

<sup>49</sup> John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Faith*, vol. 2 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 88–90.

<sup>50</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 29–32.

<sup>51</sup> D. Gene Williams Jr., *B-Theory of Time: A Defense of God’s Eternal Now in Christian Theology*, accessed March 2025, <https://trinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

spiritual domain. This is precisely the logic behind statements like Deuteronomy 10:17: “*For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords.*” Such declarations are only meaningful if those other *elohim* actually exist in some sense. After all, it is no feat to be sovereign over imaginary beings; even a human could claim supremacy over fictional gods. The biblical authors are not praising Yahweh for triumphing over non-existent rivals—they are exalting Him as the Most High over a real, populated spiritual hierarchy. His supremacy is not diminished by their existence—it is magnified by it.

The DCW also provides meaningful context for explaining difficult passages involving rebellion, judgment, and supernatural conflict. Genesis 6:1–4, for instance, is often dismissed or allegorized due to its reference to “*sons of God*” and Nephilim.<sup>52</sup> Yet when interpreted within the DCW and Second Temple literature like 1 Enoch, this passage becomes a key part of understanding spiritual corruption prior to the flood.<sup>53</sup> Rather than avoiding these texts, apologists can now explain their meaning within the broader biblical narrative of cosmic rebellion and redemption.

Furthermore, the New Testament’s language of “*principalities*,” “*powers*,” and “*rulers*” makes little sense without the DCW. When Paul says Christ has disarmed the rulers and authorities (Col 2:15), or that we wrestle “*not against flesh and blood*” but against spiritual powers (Eph 6:12), he is assuming a supernatural worldview where real,

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<sup>52</sup> D. Gene Williams Jr., *Sons of God and the Nephilim: A Study in Biblical Rebellion and Redemption*, accessed March 2025, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Enoch 6–16; see also James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 15–36.

malevolent beings oppose God’s purposes.<sup>54</sup> The DCW offers coherence between the Old and New Testaments on this front, defending the internal consistency of Scripture.

Perhaps most significantly, the DCW re-enchants the biblical narrative for a modern, disenchanted age. In a culture dominated by materialism and skepticism, many people—even within the Church—struggle to believe in the unseen.<sup>55</sup> The DCW reintroduces spiritual realism, inviting readers into a world where divine beings, spiritual warfare, and cosmic purpose are not fantasy but foundational truth. This offers a powerful contrast to both secular reductionism and superficial religiosity.

In a time when skeptics question the Bible’s reliability, coherence, and supernatural claims, the Divine Council Worldview not only explains the text more faithfully but also defends its relevance more powerfully. It allows apologists to affirm the complexity of Scripture without compromise, showing that the Bible’s strange language is not a liability—it is evidence of a worldview that still has explanatory power for the world we inhabit.

## **IX. PHILOSOPHICAL AND WORLDVIEW INTEGRATION**

The Divine Council Worldview (DCW) does more than reshape biblical theology—it also challenges and refines how Christians engage broader philosophical questions. At its core, the DCW offers a metaphysic that affirms the existence of an unseen realm populated by real spiritual agents, providing categories necessary for addressing evil, freedom, divine providence, and human responsibility. In contrast to

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<sup>54</sup> Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:15.

<sup>55</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 543–546.



modern materialism or even classical theism unshaped by biblical cosmology, the DCW introduces ontological nuance that helps Scripture make sense on its own terms.

First, the DCW helps resolve confusion surrounding ontological categories in Christian theology. The Hebrew term *elohim* does not refer to a species or essence of being but rather a realm of residence—inhabitants of the unseen spiritual world.<sup>56</sup> By this understanding, God (Yahweh) is unique not because He is the only spiritual being, but because He is the only uncreated, all-powerful, and self-existent One. All other *elohim*, whether disembodied dead, angels, demons, or divine rebels, are created and contingent. This framework preserves the absolute transcendence of God while acknowledging the genuine existence and agency of lesser beings.<sup>57</sup>

Second, this model supplies a non-reductive explanation for evil. Unlike dualistic systems, which pit good and evil deities against each other, or deterministic systems that attribute all causality to God, the DCW affirms that spiritual beings have real volition and moral accountability.<sup>58</sup> Rebellious divine agents—like the serpent, the Watchers, or territorial powers—introduce evil into the spiritual and material realms through their misuse of delegated authority. This aligns with Scripture’s consistent portrayal of layered rebellion (Genesis 3, 6, 11) and provides a metaphysical basis for evil that does not impugn God’s character.

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<sup>56</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 28–29.

<sup>57</sup> John Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 220–223.

<sup>58</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 57–59.

Third, the DCW is compatible with Molinism<sup>59</sup>—a philosophical model of divine providence that affirms libertarian free will alongside God’s exhaustive foreknowledge. In a Molinist framework, God’s middle knowledge includes the free choices of all creatures, human and divine.<sup>60</sup> Thus, God can sovereignly orchestrate a world in which rebellious spiritual beings play a role, yet without being the author of their evil. This supports a view of history that is both governed and responsive, preserving divine sovereignty and creaturely freedom within a spiritual war framework.

Fourth, the DCW reorients the Christian worldview away from naturalistic reductionism. In the modern West, many Christians functionally adopt a two-tiered cosmology: one “*real*” world governed by science and another “*religious*” world relegated to personal belief. The DCW collapses this dichotomy by presenting a unified cosmos in which the spiritual and material interact continuously.<sup>61</sup> This worldview aligns with the lived experience of many non-Western cultures and with the cosmology assumed by every biblical author. By recovering this supernatural realism, Christians are equipped to engage both spiritual seekers and hardened skeptics with a coherent and integrated vision of reality.

Finally, the DCW gives intellectual and theological weight to otherwise vague language about “*spiritual warfare*.” The struggle Paul describes in Ephesians 6:12 is not

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<sup>59</sup> D. Gene Williams Jr., *Navigating Divine Providence: A Critical Examination of Five Views: Provisionism, Arminianism, Calvinism, Molinism, and Open Theism*, accessed March 2025, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

<sup>60</sup> William Lane Craig, *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 126–128.

<sup>61</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 194–196.

metaphorical, psychological, or sociopolitical—it is real, intelligent resistance from hostile spiritual powers.<sup>62</sup> The philosophical categories supplied by the DCW make this claim not only defensible but necessary for a consistent biblical worldview.

In this way, the Divine Council Worldview functions as both a philosophical correction and a worldview reorientation, calling Christians to embrace the Bible’s supernatural claims as intellectually satisfying, spiritually grounded, and existentially meaningful.

## **X. CONCLUSION: REENCHANTING THE BIBLICAL WORLD**

The Divine Council Worldview (DCW) offers a necessary corrective to the theological minimalism and spiritual reductionism that dominate much of modern biblical interpretation. It restores to Scripture its full supernatural drama—a cosmos populated by divine beings, governed by Yahweh, contested by rebels, and ultimately reclaimed by Christ. This worldview is not speculative theology but a recovery of what the biblical writers already assumed and articulated across genres, testaments, and historical contexts.<sup>63</sup>

By approaching Scripture through a dual-lens hermeneutic, believers can read the Old Testament with sensitivity to its ancient context while also embracing the Spirit-inspired fulfillment revealed in the New Testament. Ignoring either lens leads to imbalance: a purely contextual reading risks severing the canonical unity of Scripture, while a purely Christocentric reading risks anachronism and theological distortion.

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<sup>62</sup> Ephesians 6:12.

<sup>63</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 15–16.

Together, these lenses sharpen the reader’s vision, allowing the layers of meaning in the text to come into focus.<sup>64</sup>

In tracing the DCW through both Testaments, we have seen how the Bible tells a cosmic story of delegated authority, rebellion, judgment, and redemption. The Watchers, the territorial spirits, and the disinherited nations are not obscure curiosities but essential elements of the biblical worldview—explaining the problem of evil, the necessity of judgment, and the cosmic scale of Christ’s victory.<sup>65</sup>

For theology, this worldview challenges simplistic categories and calls for deeper reflection on divine sovereignty, agency, and eschatology. For apologetics, it equips believers to answer difficult questions about the so-called “*gods*” of the Bible, spiritual warfare, and the coherence between the Old and New Testaments. And for worldview formation, it reawakens the Church to the enchanted reality of the biblical cosmos—a universe alive with spiritual conflict and divine purpose.<sup>66</sup>

The Divine Council Worldview does not add to Scripture; it simply refuses to subtract what has always been there. It calls the modern Church to rediscover what the ancient Church knew instinctively: that the Bible is not a disenchanting text offering abstract truths but a cosmic narrative of rebellion and reclamation. To read it rightly is not only to understand its content, but to see the world as it truly is—supernatural, contested, and ultimately redeemed through Christ.

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<sup>64</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 12–14.

<sup>65</sup> Brian Godawa, *When Giants Were Upon the Earth: The Watchers, the Nephilim, and the Biblical Cosmic War* (Los Angeles: Embedded Pictures Publishing, 2014), 88–92.

<sup>66</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 16–18.

## APPENDIX A: VISUALIZING THE DIVINE COUNCIL WORLDVIEW



This symbolic illustration portrays the Divine Council Worldview (DCW) as presented in Scripture and Second Temple literature. At the center, Yahweh—radiant, enthroned, and transcendent—sits above all other spiritual beings, affirming His aseity and sovereignty. Surrounding Him is a divine assembly of elohim seated in deliberation, reminiscent of scenes in Psalm 82, Job 1, and 1 Kings 22. Below the heavenly court, the earth is depicted with nations under the dominion of lesser spiritual authorities, with one beam of divine light marking Israel as Yahweh’s inheritance (Deut 32:8–9, LXX). The scrolls and apostolic figures around the circumference represent the interpretive lenses of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, reflecting the dual-lens hermeneutic emphasized throughout this study. This image encapsulates the theological and cosmological structure affirmed in the DCW and illustrates its implications for understanding God’s governance, justice, and redemptive plan.

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