

I. Introduction

- A. Have you ever read the Bible and had a passage just completely not make sense? Not sit well with your worldview/conception of reality and spiritual things?
 - 1. Bible passages too "out there"/seem to contradict your current understanding?
 - 2. This is the rabbit hole we're going to jump right into this morning.
- B. Last week Matt talked about the Kingdom of God. He described it as the King's power over the King's people in the King's place. This is the Kingdom that Jesus brought with Him in His first coming.
- C. Matt also said, "When Adam and Eve made their decision to rebel, it kicked off a rival kingdom here on earth. A kingdom in rebellion to God's Kingdom."
 - 1. This rival kingdom on Earth was instigated by another. Spiritual rebels
 - 2. The war here on Earth for the hearts and minds of humans is a reflection of the war happening in the spiritual realm. Today, our goal is to begin to understand that rival kingdom.
 - 3. Disclaimer: this may challenge your assumptions and trigger your modern sensibilities.
 - 4. But be assured, I'm not teaching anything "NEW" this morning.
- D. In fact, the view of Scripture and the spiritual realm that I'm going to walk through this morning is actually very ancient. Christian belief for centuries. Based on the actual text of Scripture.
- E. Also, you need to know that this perspective on the Bible's teaching comes from a deep desire to understand the Scripture authors' intended meaning
- F. At CrossPoint, our approach to Scripture is to honor the original meaning of the text, no matter how different or outrageous or supernatural it seems to our modern sensibilities.
 - 1. We, in the west, are very uncomfortable with the supernatural, even those of us who follow Jesus.
 - 2. We have a predictable flinch reaction to try to de-supernaturalize anything the Bible teaches that doesn't mesh with our modern worldview.
- G. But let me remind you, if you are a Christian, by definition you believe that God became a man, was born from a virgin and that somehow this God-man's death, resurrection and ascension back to Heaven, up through the clouds is the bedrock of your faith. It doesn't get any more supernatural or outrageous than that.
- H. As citizens of Jesus' Kingdom, we must rediscover and re-embrace a biblical worldview which, by nature, is a SUPERNATURAL worldview.
 - 1. There is so much more going on "behind the curtain" than what we can see with our eyes.
 - 2. But if this was the worldview that followers of God have held for thousands of years, what happened? Why don't we also have this same worldview?
- I. "Age of Enlightenment" predominantly in the 1700s
 - 1. Authority shifted from tradition/religion to "reason"/scientific method (Marsden)

2. Some left religion altogether. Vast majority of people, they maintained their belief in God while adapting their interpretation of Scripture, to match the science and reason.
 3. Not saying faith and science should be at odds. In a perfect world, with perfect and complete information, there wouldn't be a tension there.
- J. This tendency to de-supernaturalize Scripture had a range of effects: from opting for less supernatural explanations all the way to theologically liberal and deist theology that even denied the deity of Jesus.
1. The effect for most wasn't to deny their Christianity altogether, but rather to reinterpret Scripture to be "less supernatural" and more palatable to the new "enlightened" western culture.
 2. This is the religious tradition that most of us who have grown up in America have inherited.
 3. But unfortunately, this tradition that we have inherited has a history of working around the more supernatural interpretations of Scripture rather than embracing them. We've re-interpreted Scripture to make its meaning more comfortable for us. **This has profoundly affected our ability to have our beliefs shaped first by Scripture rather than culture.**
- K. Our goal today is to regain a biblical belief system about the spiritual realities that exist, the way God sees them and has inspired His authors to describe them in Scripture.
- L. Let's start with what Jesus said after His death and resurrection and right before He ascended in the clouds back up to Heaven.
- II. Matthew 28:16-20
- Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him they worshiped Him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority **in Heaven** and on Earth has been given to me. Go **therefore** and make disciples **of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*
- A. Have you ever wondered why Jesus said "All authority," not only on Earth but "in Heaven" has been given to Him?
1. Where did the authority come from? And who had it before it was given over to Jesus? In other words, "If God the Father has given Jesus authority in the heavenly realm, who had it before. Who was it taken from?"
 2. We know that the writers of Scripture believed in two spheres of existence.
 - a. There are beings who live and exist physically here on the Earth: earthlings
 - b. There are beings who live and exist spiritually in the "heavens" (the Spiritual realm). Divine Beings or Spiritual Beings
 3. These divine beings are referred to in the Old Testament by the Hebrew word "Elohim."
 - a. One use of the word is a singular sense to refer to God, the most high God.
 - b. Same exact word is used in a plural sense to refer to other spiritual beings, translated into English as "gods."
 - c. When you and I hear the word "GOD" we tend to assign all kinds of meaning and attributes to that word: "Omnis", Creator, worthy of worship

4. But when the original writers and readers of the Old Testament wrote or read that word “Elohim”, they didn’t attach all of those attributes to it unless it was very clearly referring to the specific God, Yahweh.
 5. To them, “Elohim” was a class of being: a being who existed as spirit in the heavenly realm, a divine being, a spiritual being, but there were various different kinds of beings.
 6. And so to them, they would have no problem speaking of “the gods.”
 - a. Because their worldview was that the spiritual realm was full of spiritual beings of various kinds. The spiritual realm is populated with diverse kinds of spiritual beings.
 - b. Just like on Earth, there is a very diverse set of physical beings: from humans, to dogs, to earthworms to amoebas. All are earthlings, all physical in form and yet also diverse in design, ability, power, and intelligence.
 7. This realm of the divine is what Jesus is referring to when He says that “All authority in Heaven ...” has been given to Him.
 8. Matthew 28:18- In essence, He’s saying, “The authority that once was delegated to other divine beings has now been reassigned to Jesus.”
- B. But why would all this authority need to be taken away from other divine beings and given to Jesus?
1. Because, just like humans, many divine beings also sinned.
 2. This reality is plainly described in Psalm 82 if we have spiritual eyes to see it.

III. Psalm 82

God [Elohim] has taken His place in the divine council [what’s that?? Keep reading]; in the midst **of the gods** [Elohim] He holds judgment: (Psalm 82:1)

- A. So here we have a courtroom scene.
1. God is surrounded by a group called “the divine council.” This is a group of Elohim that have been delegated authority to rule over nations and people groups.
 2. But these “gods” are evil. Look at how Yahweh God indicts them for their wickedness:
“How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the Earth are shaken. (Psalm 82:2-5)
- B. These Elohim, spiritual beings, used their power to lead humans into wickedness, into exploiting the weak, fatherless, afflicted, and poor.
1. And because these gods have gone wayward, the nations they rule are walking in darkness. The sin of the gods (Elohim) have a profound destructive effect on Earth.
 2. And so God pronounces judgment on these lesser spiritual beings, these gods:
*I said, “**You are gods, sons of the Most High**, all of you; nevertheless, **like men you shall die**, and fall like any prince.” (Psalm 82:6-7)*
- C. The Psalmist then begs God to do what Jesus would accomplish in Matthew 28: Arise, O God, judge the Earth; for you shall inherit all the nations! (Psalm 82:8)

1. God, I know that you delegated the rule of the nations of the Earth to these fallen gods, these rebellious Elohim, but I plead with you to bring judgment on them and take that authority back for yourself. YOU begin to rule all the nations again!
2. So why will God strip their authority away and give it to Jesus? Because they rebelled against God and were using their power and authority to destroy humans and gain worship for themselves.
3. But how in the world did we get to a place where rebellious spiritual beings are assigned authority over nations to rule as their own?
4. We need to back up to the beginning and then move forward to tell that story.

IV. Genesis 3 Preface

- A. So in Genesis, the very beginning of this whole story, we see that God makes humans.
 1. But He doesn't just make them, He makes them in His image.
 2. This means that human beings represent God on the Earth and are given dominion, authority to both fill the Earth with more humans and to rule over it.
- B. At its very essence, God makes man and woman the kings and queens of the Earth and delegates authority of the Earth—this physical realm—to them, but then we get to Genesis 3 and it all goes wrong.

V. Genesis 3:1-5

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, (Genesis 3:1a)

- A. Ok, pause for one second. Do snakes talk? No, they don't. Not now and not then. But this serpent figure is speaking.
 1. What would an original reader, with a supernatural worldview, have assumed of this being? That this was an Elohim, a spiritual being that had taken on a physical form in order to be able to interact with a physical being.
 2. And so the serpent says:
“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:1b-5)
- B. So this serpent uses trickery and the twisting of God's words, and then outright contradiction of God's words in order to entice the humans into crossing a line.
 1. What line? The line between what God and the other spiritual beings know and carry (knowledge of good and evil) and what humans were designed to know and carry: representing God, knowing only the good that He had created and spreading that good across the globe.
 2. And in a way, this divine being tempts the humans to reach out and take what they already have! Already made in the image of God.
 3. But the serpent wants them to believe that there's more to be had and it becomes very clear that his goal is to lead the humans to their destruction.
- C. This Elohim in rebellion sets himself up as the adversary of humanity.

1. He does so by enticing them to cross a line between their place and status as rulers of Earth to be like God and become rulers of Heaven.
2. But the rebellion of both mankind and spiritual beings doesn't stop here.

VI Genesis 6:1-7

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God [remember, in Psalm 82 this term is used interchangeably with "Elohim"... divine beings so, divine beings ...] saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the Earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God [divine beings] came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the Earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that He had made man on the Earth, and it grieved Him to His heart. So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."

A. Here in Genesis 6, we see a very disturbing scene.

1. Now, we see divine beings cross the line. These beings somehow leave their place in the Spirit realm. They take on physical form and have children with human women.
2. And this creates this hybrid race of beings that seem to exponentially increase the wickedness on Earth.
3. It's at this point in time that most Americans get allergic and start trying to find other explanations for what this might mean, but this is the most clear and consistent interpretation of this passage.

B. In Genesis 6 we see these spiritual beings cross the line... they leave their place to extend their presence and rule on the Earth

1. And so because this vile thing has been done and too many lines have been crossed, God decides to start over by flooding the land.
2. There's still one more crossing of the line that leads back to where we started.

VII. Genesis 11:1-9

Now the whole Earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole Earth." And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the Earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the Earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the Earth.

- A. Yet once again, we see man attempting to cross the line. We see them building a tower that attempts to cross into the heavens.
- B. The whole point is to become more than they are and “make a name” for themselves.
 - 1. Also, notice that they do it in direct defiance to the commission that God had given humans at their creation, to go out and fill the world.
 - 2. The people of Babel say, “No, let’s make a huge city so that we can all stay here and not disperse to fill the world.”
- C. So God, presumably speaking to His divine council of other spiritual beings says, “Let’s go down and put a stop to this.”
 - 1. He confuses their languages and disperses them across the Earth.
 - 2. Lucky for us, in Deuteronomy 32, Moses gives us more detail:

VIII. Deuteronomy 32:7-9

Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. 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. But the Lord’s portion is His people, Jacob (Israel) His allotted heritage.

- A. As Moses reflects back on the tower of Babel moment, he elaborates on what was happening in the spiritual realm when God dispersed the nations.
 - 1. This passage teaches us that God “disinherited” the peoples of the Earth from His direct rule.
 - 2. And instead, God divides mankind up into nations and delegates authority over them to fallen “sons of God”... these Elohim who are in rebellion.
 - 3. And these Elohim become the national gods over each different nation.
- B. As a consequence of their rebellion, God gave the people of the world over to be ruled by the ones whose status they were trying to attain—the rebellious spiritual beings.
 - 1. This is why we read in the Bible about different peoples worshiping different gods.
 - 2. They were being ruled by wicked divine beings who demanded worship like the Most High God. And these small “g” gods had real authority and real dominion over them.
- C. But, out of all of the people of the Earth, God starts a new nation, Israel, that He keeps for Himself, to rule over directly, not delegated to a rebellious divine being.
 - 1. And not only did God choose Israel to directly rule over, we see in Genesis 12 that Israel was to be God’s gateway to reclaiming the nations.
 - 2. By directly ruling over Israel Himself, God’s plan was to bless the nations through them and eventually take ALL the nations back to be His.
 - 3. And we see the fulfillment of this in the New Testament:

IX. Colossians 2:13-15

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, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.

- A. When Jesus died on the cross, it revoked the authority of the rebellious spiritual rulers and authorities.
- B. Not only did it cancel their authority, but it “put them to open shame.”
- C. His sacrifice was so great and its ramifications so unexpected that it left the evil powers standing with their jaws on the floor.
- D. Paul further comments on this in 1 Corinthians 2:

X. 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, 7-8

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified ... (He goes on to say in verse 7) But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers (this is Paul’s language for fallen divine beings ... gods) of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

- A. When Jesus took up His cross, they had no idea that He was taking up the most powerful weapon in the universe: complete, humble, sacrificial surrender to the Most High God.
- B. When the evil gods of this world, those rebellious fallen divine beings, hatched their plan to murder the true Son of God, they had no idea that they were tying their own noose.
- C. The evil powers constructed a cross to defeat Jesus, having no clue that it would be the stake driven through their own hearts.
- D. And so now, back to where we started, Matthew 28:18

XI. Matthew 28:18-19

*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority **in Heaven** and on Earth has been given to me. (Therefore) Go and make disciples **of all nations**,*

- A. When Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross, rose from the dead, ascended and was enthroned in Heaven, all power was taken away from these fallen gods who had ruled over and essentially “owned” the gentile nations. That power, that jurisdiction was given to Jesus.
- B. And so now Jesus tells His disciples who have been confined to taking the Gospel message only within the borders of Israel, that they now have the right, the jurisdiction to take that Gospel into all the nations, because the gods of those nations just had their authority revoked.
- C. The work of Jesus cancelled the power of the rebellious kingdom and so now the Gospel moves forward.
- D. What is the response of Kingdom citizens to this truth? We desire that the King’s power in the King’s people would be EXPANDING the King’s place.
- E. In other words, WE MAKE DISCIPLES.
 1. Because though the Gospel can be opposed by the evil ones it cannot be overruled. The enemy is now fighting a losing battle of attrition.
 2. And this means we have to look at people differently. We have to look at them deeper.
 3. The people around us, no matter how friend-like or enemy-like they seem, are people that Jesus died to liberate from the rebellious kingdom. And so we make disciples.



SUPERNATURAL

MATTHEW 28:16-20 AND OTHER SCRIPTURES
APRIL 18, 2021 | PASTOR TRAVIS EDGERTON



ACCOUNTABILITY FROM LAST WEEK'S LIVE IT OUT QUESTIONS

Was there anything you committed to doing after reflecting on Scripture last week during your group? Did you follow through with that commitment, what steps did you take, and is there any way we can help?

GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT AS YOU START YOUR CONVERSATION)

1 What sources of authority lead and influence the way you live?

2 What is your level of comfort with discussing the supernatural reality we see in God's Word? Whatever your response might be - should our level of comfort determine what we seek to understand?

All people live under the rules and guidance of authority figures. Whether that authority is a local or national governing authority or a supervisor at work, we all know what it means to live under the authority of another person. For Kingdom disciples, the ruling and reigning authority is Jesus Christ. It is important to understand what had to take place in the supernatural realms so that Jesus could be given this authority. Let's dig into the challenging but important reality of what the Bible teaches and how it impacts us!

QUICK REVIEW (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week's message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

DIG DEEPER (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

1 Someone read **Matthew 28:16-20** for the group.

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw Him they worshiped Him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to Me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Why did Jesus lead up to His command with a statement of His authority?

Where did this authority come from? Who had this authority before it was given to Jesus?

The goal of Kingdom disciples is to live transformed lives that transfer the values of the Kingdom of God to Earth so that they replicate themselves in the lives of others. The result of such replication is God's exercising His rule and authority from Heaven to history through His Kingdom disciples.

Why do we sometimes treat “Go therefore and make disciples ...” like a polite request instead of an authoritative command from Jesus?

2 Someone read **Psalm 82** in their Bible for the group.

What does God accuse the “gods,” or spiritual beings, of in this Psalm?

God is surrounded by a group called “the divine council.” This is a group of elohim that have been delegated authority to rule over nations and people groups. But these “gods” are evil. These elohim, or spiritual beings, used their power to lead humans into wickedness by exploiting the weak, fatherless, afflicted, and poor. And because these gods have gone wayward, the nations they rule are walking in darkness. The sin of the gods (elohim) has a profound destructive effect on Earth. In response, God pronounces judgment on these lesser spiritual beings.

Is this idea of other spiritual beings and God ruling over a divine council new to you? Why is this important to understand?

3 Someone read **Colossians 2:13-15** for the group.

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.

What did Jesus’ death accomplish for humanity?

Who are the “rulers and authorities” in v. 15? What has Christ done to them through His death on the cross?

Looking at what is laid out in the passages above and the others Travis referenced on Sunday (Gen 3:1-5, Gen 6:1-7, Gen 11:1-9, Deut 32:7-9, 1 Cor 2:1-2, 7-8) – **Why is it important to know that there are fallen spiritual beings that, although we may not see them, we know are working to influence people into rebellion against God?**

LIVE IT OUT (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

1 How might a greater awareness of Jesus’ power, authority and what He accomplished on the cross give you confidence to live out His command of making disciples?

2 Whether someone seems like your friend, a stranger or an enemy - how might you need to look at people differently because of the impact the Gospel can have in their lives?

3 If what we read in the Bible on Sunday and tonight is true, what impact does it have on our life? What is something you need to change or do, so your actions, thoughts and words are consistent with what was revealed in God’s Word?

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time in prayer with your group.

NEXT WEEK: CITIZEN Week 3

Take some time before Sunday to pray that God would use these messages and the truth in His word to transform the minds and lives of those who hear it. Pray that God would move you and others in our church to live out what is revealed in His word. Remember to take good notes so you are ready to add to the discussion your home group will have!

PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of being in a Home Group. Here are some tips to help make group prayer be a life-giving aspect of your group.

PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME: Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request or praise during the prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next request or praise.

PRAY MORE THAN ONCE: If your group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one should be required to pray.

KEEP PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE: Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one should be required to pray out loud.

How to Use this Discussion Guide

This guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and becoming like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel the need to ask every question during your group discussion. This guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community. In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!

Visit cpmodesto.org/groupleaders to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit cpmodesto.org/homegroups and use the Home Group Finder!

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 28:16-20

28:18 Before the resurrection, Jesus had authority (7:29; 9:6,8; 11:27; 21:23). However, through the resurrection, the Father granted Him all authority over heaven and earth, an authority far greater than that which Satan had vainly promised Him.

28:19 The command to extend their mission worldwide brings to a climax Matthew's repeated theme of Gentile participation in God's salvation. The inclusion of four Gentile women in Jesus' genealogy and the summons of the magi to worship the infant Christ foreshadowed the disciples' mission of making disciples of all nations. Baptism marked a person's entrance into the faith community. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is a reference to the Trinity. Matthew's language shows that a clear understanding of Jesus' nature and identity as God was required before baptism.

28:20 The Great Commission (vs. 19-20) is preceded by a reference to Jesus' authority and followed by the promise of Jesus' spiritual presence among us. Both are necessary if we are to fulfill our God-given mission.

PSALM 82

82:1 The phrase “God has taken His place” indicates sentencing or judgment in progress (74:22; 94:2; Isa 3:13; 33:10) since judges normally sat (Ex 18:14; Jdg 4:5; Isa 28:6). The divine assembly has its equivalents in Ugaritic, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian mythology, where it refers to “lesser gods” in a pantheon. In the OT, the designation either refers to heavenly servant beings (103:19) or judges and governors appointed by God as political leaders (Ex 21:6; 22:8; 2Ch 19:5-6). The Scriptures place God in the presence of a divine council consisting of good and evil spirits (1Ki 22:19-22), sometimes designated as “sons of God” (Job 1:6-12; Ps 82:6). The emphasis on judgment (vv. 1-3,8) reinforces the failure of God’s servants.

82:2 God formally indicted the appointed officials for social injustice since their decisions favored those who were wicked.

82:5 The psalmist characterized the officials as those who did not know or understand, using language reminiscent of the impotent idols often depicted by the prophet Isaiah as blind, deaf, mute, and powerless (Isa 44:9,18; 46:1-2,6-7; Jer 10:3-5). The distorted administration of justice disrupted the cosmic order as originally intended by God, threatening the foundations on which God had established the world.

82:6-7 Kings who failed to perform responsibly and ethically deserved death. The concept finds support in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 28:1-19), where the Lord banished His divine servant, the king of Tyre, from His presence to die like a common man.

82:8 The Lord as Creator and King restores cosmic balance through the exercise of divine judgment on the nations.

COLOSSIANS 2:13-15

2:13 Prior to their faith in Christ, the Colossians were spiritually dead in trespasses (Eph 2:1-3) and cut off from God’s people because they were Gentiles (Eph 2:11-12). However, in Christ, God made them alive and forgave all their sins (Eph 2:4-8).

2:14 The “certificate of debt” may refer to a handwritten document or to the Mosaic law. Paul typically viewed the law’s purpose as revealing the guilt of sinners (Dt 27:26; Rm 7:13; 1Co 15:56; Gal 3:10). Some Jewish writings, likewise, speak of God keeping records of people’s sins as debts against them. God, however, has abolished those records through Christ’s substitutionary atonement that was accomplished when He died on the cross.

2:15 The phrase “disgraced them publicly” relates to God humiliating these spiritual rulers in a public spectacle of shame and defeat. The word “triumphed” evokes the imagery of a triumphal procession where a victorious general would lead a parade to display the booty and prisoners of war from his conquest.