

- LEADER'S GUIDE -

GOD'S STORY

Discovering YOUR Part In
God's SUPERNATURAL Plan

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INTRODUCTION

One June evening, I found myself sitting around a camp fire next to 14-year-old Joshua. He asked if I liked Star Wars. I said yes. He grinned.

“What era is your favorite?”

Uh-oh. While I’m very familiar with the movies, I wasn’t at all familiar with the books. He began unpacking the grand epic of the Star Wars universe, as revealed in the novels, comic books, television shows... oh and the movies. I realized I had a very superficial understanding of the Star Wars universe and mythology. He, on the other hand, knew all sorts of interesting story lines and themes that make up the mythology of Star Wars. He was extremely excited to talk about it, and I wondered if he’d be as passionate in talking about the Bible, with its epic and juicy supernatural story lines.

For several years, I served as a volunteer youth leader in three different church plants (two were multi-sites). In the first church plant, I had about a half dozen students, and tried to be very cool with the teenagers. I was intimidated by them and desperately wanted to relate. My youth meetings often had games and included hip topics. The kids enjoyed it, but the group did not grow, and in hindsight, I’m not certain anyone grew closer to Christ.

The second youth group, my co-leader Karen and I started with about fifteen students. We were a church plant/multi-site and were well-resourced from the main campus. Karen and I were less interested in being very cool, and more interested in being biblically thoughtful, culturally relevant and

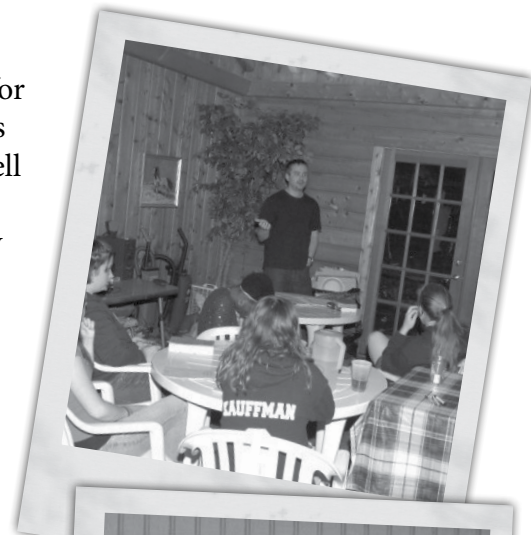
spiritually powerful. We knew other churches in town had cooler parties, hipper youth culture, and better resources, but we focused on our mission. If kids didn’t want to be biblically thoughtful, culturally relevant and spiritually powerful, then this

youth group wasn’t for them. A couple years later, we averaged well over fifty students each week and many of them grew much closer to the Lord.

In the third church plant, I started with about five students. I was getting older and essentially abandoned trying to be “cool” and focused more on pure Bible teaching with cultural application and Holy Spirit-led ministry. There were plenty of other larger youth groups in town with far cooler programs, and I wasn’t interested in competing with them. I was, however, curious if focusing on hardcore Bible teaching and Holy Spirit-led ministry would retain students, let alone attract new ones. Within a few months, we had several salvations and baptisms, and grew to more than 20 students, eclipsing a third of the regular adult attenders in our little church.

It turns out the Bible’s epic and juicy story lines are pretty interesting. I discovered this aspect of the Bible through Dr. Michael S. Heiser’s work on recovering the supernatural worldview of the biblical writers, with their awareness of the incredible interaction between the spiritual realm and physical realm. Many problem passages in the Bible that stumped me and other Christians evaporated as I read them with the worldview of the biblical writers.

More to the point, understanding the supernatural mindset of the biblical writers, and reading scripture with that mindset, effectively equips us with worldview that actually makes sense of human history, our present





world, and our private lives. From geopolitical events, to national trends, to high school drama, to family problems, we can understand the supernatural world revealed in the Bible is real and continues to exert a sort of gravitational pull on events and lives today. This knowledge equips us to try and think like Jesus did about ourselves, those around us, and the drama of the world. As we gain Jesus' perspective, we can begin acting more in accordance with God's will. The Bible becomes more relevant and meaningful than ever.

Under Dr.
Heiser's instruction,

I felt like I was reading the Bible for the first time; and in fact reading the Bible with the supernatural worldview of the biblical writers actually magnifies the awesomeness of Jesus Christ more than most evangelical traditions, with their habitual efforts to demythologize scripture.

I wondered if teaching the Bible through this supernatural worldview would equip middle and high school students to think differently about the world as well. I wondered if they'd find it engaging. Beginning in the second youth group, I began testing out messages based on the biblical writers' worldview, rather than the scientific materialism or Gnosticism that undergirds American youth culture. Instead of getting caught up in the various stories and drawing moral lessons from them, I wanted to teach the Bible stripped of denominational filters, through the supernatural worldview of the biblical writers. By the third youth group, I taught long series on the Bible's supernatural narrative.

How did the students respond?

It turns out, many teenagers have something of a supernatural worldview already. Their worldview is crafted by the Gnosticism in movies, television shows, novels, and even their own experiences. Students are having supernatural experiences more frequently than most would imagine. They encounter spirits, play with Ouija boards, practice yoga, flirt with witchcraft and eastern mysticism. If their churches don't equip them with a truthful way to think about these experiences, who will?

As I tested these lessons on actual teenagers, they became so engrossed in God's story that they brought their friends, some nonbelievers and some from other churches. "You have got to hear this. It makes so much sense!" Texts, tweets and Instagram posts flew around about being #mindblown at youth group. I've never seen such excitement about youth lessons before.

The point isn't to poach students from other youth groups, but to equip all Christian students with a mindset that makes sense of the world they live in, and the Bible does this, if taught from the worldview of the biblical writers.



PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

1. ***Students can handle it.*** Challenge them. They won't understand everything, but don't dilute the raw potency of the Bible's messages. The lessons are very big, with a lot of theological messaging packed into it. This series gives students an opportunity to drink from a fire hose.
2. ***Students should not be protected from their Bibles.*** The Bible is intensely interesting and confronts us with very shocking concepts. It causes us to ask questions that the Bible doesn't always answer, and the answers it does give sometimes shakes our worldview to its core. The students will love it.
3. ***Offer something for students at various stages of development.*** These messages contain both simple concepts and extremely deep theological ideas. Students, like adults, are on various stages of biblical understanding. There should be something for everyone.
4. ***It's okay if students get some of it wrong.*** Once a parent expressed concerns because his child came home excited to talk about Leviathan, but didn't have all the details right. Should we be teaching these advanced concepts, he wondered? Of course we should. After all, you haven't figured out everything everything in the Bible, either.
5. ***Youth group should be interesting enough that students will be afraid to miss, because otherwise they miss something!*** Therefore be bold in teaching this, and watch the Holy Spirit do something miraculous.
6. ***You should be praying and fasting for your students.*** If you aren't, these lessons won't work. Nothing will work. Walking with Jesus in a world of darkness is too important to not pray and fast for your ministries.

THE FORMAT

1. Teaching. You have the option of teaching the material or following the video series. Each 20-minute lesson is crammed with information. Some of these ideas may be new to youth leaders. Therefore, each lesson includes recommended reading and sources. Most of this material is supported by Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible, First Edition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015).

2. Small Group Discussion. After the lesson, student discussion or journaling is recommended. The questions are designed to challenge the students. The point of the questions isn't to answer them all, but to help the students chew on the material.

- ***Biblically Thoughtful*** - This examines the lesson through various questions related to scripture.
- ***Culturally Relevant*** - Reading the Bible supernaturally lends itself very well to the experiences and challenges students face today. These questions help apply the lesson to how they think about life.
- ***Spiritually Powerful*** - What we learn sometimes demands an opportunity to respond. This may include a time of worship, but certainly, it should include an opportunity for students to engage in Holy Spirit-ministry. To be successful, it's important for the Holy Spirit to be given freedom to minister to the students. This is where the students learn to engage in prayer ministry for each other.

GOD'S STORY: BEFORE CREATION

What is God's grand story? What part do you have in it?

This lesson examines the situation before Creation of the physical universe.

Introduction: *What was there before God made the world?*

1. What was going on before God created the universe? Many people are familiar with the creation accounts in the book of Genesis, but the Bible has many different descriptions of Creation, including what was there before Creation.
2. Psalm 74:12-17 is a very old account of Creation. Read it. What's going on here?
3. God is King. Since we live in a democracy, we have a hard time understanding kings and kingdoms. So take a moment, and go back in time with your imagination, to a time when nations were ruled by kings. In ancient times, a king was the supreme head of a government. Before a king can rule, he first took over a new area. In the case of God, it's the Earth. Look at the passage again. How did God take over the Earth? First, God tamed Leviathan.

Before Creation Existed Leviathan

1. In the ancient world, the Sea is a symbol of chaos. The sea is un-tameable. It's dangerous. From the sea came food that gives life, but sometimes also storms that destroy. Seas are the space humans can't live on or in. We can't walk on it. We can't calm it. We can't quiet the storms. Do you agree? Can you think of anyone who can walk on water, calm the seas, and quiet the storms?
2. The ancients wanted to know, who can conquer and bring order to the chaos? In the ancient world, life was very chaotic. They never knew when some invader would come in and kill all the men and take the women and children into slavery. They never knew when some sickness would wipe out the village or an earthquake would destroy their homes, or if the crops would fail and they'd maybe starve. Life was hard, and the ancients wanted to know, who could hold chaos in check?
3. To help think about chaos, the ancients thought of it as a monster - a chaos monster - called Leviathan. Leviathan is a multi-headed dragon from the Sea: a symbol or personification of chaos. We do similar things, when we name hurricanes. By personifying destructive chaotic forces, we can better wrap our hands around them. Well, the ancients wanted to know: who can tame and hold Leviathan in check?
4. Before Creation, there was Leviathan. In Psalm 74, the psalmist celebrates God wrestling and defeating Leviathan, stomping it to order the chaos into a functional, safe world for humans to live in. Before God creates, he deals with Leviathan. In our own lives, Leviathan continues. We still deal with chaos and we wonder who will deal with it. The Prophet has promised that someday, God will actually kill Leviathan.

Before Creation Existed the Sons of God

1. The Book of Job is about some really bad things happening to a guy named Job, and then for about 35 chapters, he and his friends sit around arguing over why bad things happen to good people. Finally, God steps in and explains that Job doesn't know what he's talking about. Job concludes the book by repenting and admitting he spoke without knowing.
2. In Job 38:3-7, God is sarcastically asking Job if he was there when God created the universe. Let's read it, and notice who was there before creation also.

3. I mentioned God is King and the King has a government. Usually kings have relatives to run the government – this is called the Kings’s court or council.
4. In Job, notice who are watching God, their King, create. The Sons of God! They are immortal, spiritual beings. They are divine beings. They should live forever. They live in heaven with God. They are powerful. Sometimes in scripture they are called Morning Stars, the Watchers, the Holy Ones, the Stars of God, the Divine Council and the Heavenly Host. (See Dan 4:17, Isaiah 14:13, Psalm 82:1). They make up God’s court. God delegates the operation of his government to them. God created them.

The Word of Yahweh

1. God decided to make a new nation. He takes 400 years to do this, but he decides to start with a man named Abram. In Genesis 15, God and Abram are already friends. Let’s read Genesis 15:1-6
2. Who shows up... the Word of Yahweh. (In most English translations, the name of Yahweh is “LORD.” So the “the word of the LORD” is actually “the word of Yahweh”. The LEB renders it thus.) The Word of Yahweh is a person who is separate from God in heaven, but still God. He is God in human form. Abram could see the Word. It says the Word took him outside. The Word was someone Abram recognized and interacted with physically. The Old Testament has lots of times when the Word of Yahweh appeared in physical form.
3. Read John 1:1-3, 14. Who is the Word? The Word was in the beginning, and he was with God, and he was God. So, the Word is God, but he’s also separate from God. They are two persons, but one essence. Then in verse 14, the Word became flesh... Who is the Word?
4. What was around before Creation? Leviathan, the sons of God, and the Word.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Leviathan

Why wasn’t Leviathan mentioned in Genesis? By the time Genesis One was written, it was obvious that God didn’t struggle to order the chaos, so there’s no point in personifying chaos as a monster anymore.

From *Unseen Realm*, page 53:

In the original creation chapter, God also “divided the waters” (Gen 1:6–7). Virtually all of the language in verses Psalm 74:16–17 can be found in Genesis 1 (Gen 1:4–5, 9–10, 14–18). Confusing? An ancient Israelite would have no trouble deciphering the messaging in Psalm 74 and recognizing that it ties the exodus crossing to creation—and then links both events to slaying a sea monster known as Leviathan.

In the ancient world, Leviathan is sometimes conceived of with multiple heads.

In addition to Chapter 19 of *Unseen Realm*, see Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), and John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

Sons of God

In *Unseen Realm*, see chapter 3, “God’s Entourage.”

Some may ask about John 3:16, which refers to Jesus as the “only begotten” or the “one and only” son of God. The correct translation is “unique son of God.” Jesus is the Son of God who is unique from the others, because he is also God. All of the other sons of God are created angelic beings. According to Dr. Heiser:

If there are other divine sons of God, what do we make of the description of Jesus as the “only begotten” son of God (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9)? How could Jesus be the only divine son when there were others?

“Only begotten” is an unfortunately confusing translation, especially to modern ears. Not only does the translation “only begotten” seem to contradict the obvious statements in the

Old Testament about other sons of God, it implies that there was a time when the Son did not exist—that he had a beginning.

The Greek word translated by this phrase is *monogenes*. It doesn't mean "only begotten" in some sort of "birthing" sense. The confusion extends from an old misunderstanding of the root of the Greek word. For years *monogenes* was thought to have derived from two Greek terms, *monos* ("only") and *gennao* ("to beget, bear"). Greek scholars later discovered that the second part of the word *monogenes* does not come from the Greek verb *gennao*, but rather from the noun *genos* ("class, kind"). The term literally means "one of a kind" or "unique" without connotation of created origin. Consequently, since Jesus is indeed identified with Yahweh and is therefore, with Yahweh, unique among the *elohim* that serve God, the term *monogenes* does not contradict the Old Testament language.

The validity of this understanding is borne out by the New Testament itself. In Hebrews 11:17, Isaac is called Abraham's *monogenes*. If you know your Old Testament you know that Isaac was not the "only begotten" son of Abraham. Abraham had earlier fathered Ishmael (cf. Gen 16:15; 21:3). The term must mean that Isaac was Abraham's unique son, for he was the son of the covenant promises. Isaac's genealogical line would be the one through which Messiah would come. Just as Yahweh is an *elohim*, and no other *elohim* are Yahweh, so Jesus is the unique Son, and no other sons of God are like him.

Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 36–37.

To see the Divine Council in operation, see 1 Kings 22:19-23. In this passage, King Ahab asks a prophet if he should go to battle, after all the false prophets told him to do so. A prophet tells him that he saw God sitting on his throne, surrounded by the heavenly host. The Lord wants Ahab to go to the battle so he'll get killed. He asks the heavenly host for advice in how to make Ahab go. Several of the spirits suggest ideas, until finally God likes one of the suggestions and says, "Okay, go and do it." The angel comes to earth and does it. God is credited with ending Ahab. This is an example of God and his court deciding things in the spirit realm, and there are real consequences, because it works: Ahab goes to battle and gets killed.

Another example is in Daniel 4, where a Watcher comes to Nebuchadnezzar's dream with a Decree of the Watchers that Nebuchadnezzar will have his mind changed to be like a beast. God receives the credit for this act, although he delegated the decision making and implementation to the council of the holy ones.

When some of the sons of God receive worship, the Bible unhesitantly refers to them as ("small g") gods. These gods are real spiritual beings whom God created. These divine beings should not receive worship, but some did (and some still do).

The Word of Yahweh

In *Unseen Realm*, see chapters 16, 17, and 18 for a detailed work up of this. One example of the Word appearing in human form is Jeremiah 1, where the Word reaches out his hand and touches Jeremiah's mouth.

GOD'S STORY: AFTER CREATION

What is God's grand story? What part do you have in it? Last time, we looked at the situation before Creation. Today, we'll discuss the situation after Creation.

It's a story of Dominion and Identity... both lost.
And we'll learn why, if God is good, do bad things happen.

Review

What was the situation before the Creation:

1. Leviathan, the chaos monster
2. The heavenly host – the “sons of God” – which made up God the King's Court.
3. The Word. This is God, whom God used to Create. Don't get hung up on the two Person's, one God. Today, we know God is Three Persons – the Father, the Word (or Son), and the Holy Spirit. They are three persons which share the same essence. All three were in action during Creation.

“The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters, and God said...”

The Holy Spirit hovered above the waters of chaos, activated by God's Word according to God's will.

God Created Humans

1. Read Genesis 1:26-27. **God says, “Let us make...”** Who is God talking to? Many will say it's the Trinity talking to each other, but since the Genesis writers didn't have an understanding of the Trinity, this cannot be the meaning. Based on last week, who is God talking to? Who shouts for joy at the creation?
2. God said, “in our image, in our likeness... God created man in his own image.” What is the Image of God? It's not ability to commune with God or intelligence or ability to worship or create. If it were that, then some people would have more of God's image than others. It means, “**as the image of God.**” It's like when a teacher says she works **in** education or **as** an educator. **The image of God means we are God's imagers on the earth.** Even if we do not act like it or believe it, we were made to be God's representatives. Our true identity is to live as God would live on earth. God made male and female, and they share God's image equally. God made humans the “right way.” In the New Testament, the word for being made the right way is **Righteousness.**
3. Read Genesis 1:28. God made humankind's destiny to have dominion over the earth. God is King and he delegated management of the earth to humans, to rule it as God would. This means we are to extend God's rule and reign across the world. Our destiny as rulers means we co-create with God. The first thing the Man did was to name the animals. This is an act of creation. The Man did not ask for God to help him name them. God delegated that to his human representatives. Naming the animals was part of bringing God's order to the chaos. Adam stepped into his destiny and became a co-creator with God. He took dominion. God is King, and Adam began operating God's government on earth. Adam's job was to “be fruitful and multiply.” Be fruitful meant to extend God's rule across the rest of the world, which was still a wild and somewhat chaotic place. This dominion means extending the God's kingdom. Multiply means to fill it with humans who would help in administering God's government.

The Garden of Eden

1. The Garden is where God's court met on earth. It was God's earthly governmental headquarters. The heavenly court met in Eden, with divine beings and Adam and Eve as its human representatives. This meant Adam and Eve saw shining divine beings and trusted them.
2. The Garden of Eden, we meet the Serpent. The story is told in Genesis 2-3, and it's also told in Ezekiel 28. Read Ezekiel 28:11-19: This passage compares the King of Tyre to a divine being that rebelled in the Garden of Eden. Notice who is speaking: The Word of Yahweh! Notice the description of the divine being. What does he look like? The Hebrew word usually translated Serpent is "Nachash." It also can mean Diviner (or keeper of Divine knowledge) and "The Shining One", depending on context. Perhaps the author of the author meant for us to think all three things when we read that word.
3. Read Genesis 3:1-5. Here, the Serpent stole Eve's identity. He said to be like God, she had to do something. But we just read in Genesis 1 that God already made Eve like him. She desired to be like God. This is a good thing. But she should have trusted what God said about her – that she was like God, the righteousness of God – instead of what the Serpent said about her – that she wasn't good enough. When we have our God-given identity stolen or trust to ourselves or other spirits over God, we sin. We hide from the Presence of God. Hiding from the Presence of God wasn't part of God's plan. In future lessons, we'll see that God goes to considerable lengths to restore our identity and bring us into his Presence here on earth and into eternity.
4. Read Genesis 3:22-24. God is troubled because humans are trusting themselves and other divine beings over him, and turning to other spirits for divine knowledge. This won't lead to good things, so in God's mercy, he won't let them live forever until he fixes this situation. Also, in this state, they no longer can sit in God's government – Eden. They don't have access to God's presence.

Causes of Human Suffering

The Creation and the Garden of Eden stories reveal to us many causes of human suffering.

1. When humans choose to live according to their desires over God's desires.
2. When angelic beings decide to live according to their desires over God's desire.
3. When humans believe lies about who they are and act on those lies.
4. When humans turn to other spirits for divine knowledge instead of God.
5. Natural chaotic forces

God's Solution

Through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, God will address these issues. God desires to restore our lost identity, help us to live according to his desires over our desires and restore us to God's government and his presence. Then, we can partner with God to extend the Kingdom across the cosmos.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

This lesson draws heavily from *Unseen Realm*, Chapters 5 through 12.

The Four Views of Adam

This lesson series does not go into detail regarding how God created. Teachings over how God created can become needlessly divisive, and ultimately do not contribute to understanding scriptures from an ancient worldview. However, some students may want more concrete information about origins and the historical Adam. There are at least four views held by evangelical Christians regarding origins and the historical Adam. Each position holds a high view of scripture. If the topic comes up, I encourage instructors to not tell students what to believe in this regard, but to present the positions dispassionately.

1. **No Historical Adam: Evolutionary Creation View**, such as argued by Denis Lamoureux, Associate Professor of Science and Religion at St. Joseph's College in the University of Alberta, and author of *Evolutionary Creation: A Christian Approach to Evolution*. While Christians have affirmed a historical Adam in the past, Lamoureux argues modern scientific evidence for evolution precludes such belief today. Rather, God created the universe through the natural process of evolution and humanity's existence also results from evolutionary development. Evolutionary genetics and the fossil record indicate that humans share a common ancestor with chimpanzees, and that we descended from a population of about 10,000 humans. This view does not attempt to bring modern science into the Bible. The ancients had their view of reality confirmed by God, who condescended to their level to communicate truths about God, their purpose, and the spirit realm. Lamoureux suggests Adam did not exist, but was a concept used by God to communicate spiritual truths. Jesus, however, is a historical figure who died for our sins.
2. **A Historical Adam: Archetypal Creation View**, such as argued by John Walton, Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College and author of *The Lost World of Genesis: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*. Walton teaches that in Genesis One, God established the whole earth as his temple and takes up residence on day seven. This temple presents God ordering the primeval chaos into a functional government for the benefit of and to be managed by his human representatives in service to God. Adam was a historical person, but scripture's primary concern is speaking of Adam and Eve as archetypal representatives of humanity. Walton argues that not only do the Old and New Testament support this view, but so does evidence from other Ancient Near Eastern literature. Genesis 2 is concerned with the function of mankind in God's government. Adam and Eve, though historical persons, may not have been the first humans or the parents of all humankind. Their parenthood is to be viewed archetypically, not scientifically.
3. **A Historical Adam: Old-Earth Creationism View**, as argued by C. John Collins, Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary and author of *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why You Should Care*. Collins argues that Adam and Eve were historical persons, otherwise our human experience as sinners in need of redemption would not make sense. Sin came into the world through Adam and the entire Old Testament is a story of how God enters into a covenant with his people because they are estranged from him due to sin. God is on a mission to rescue sinners. Collins asserts that humankind is one family originating from one pair of ancestors, whom God created supernaturally. Collins reads Genesis 1-2 in such a way that does not preclude evolutionary processes or long periods of time.
4. **A Historical Adam: Young-Earth Creation View**, as argued by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament at The Master's Seminary and author of *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*. Collins argues that God created the universe in six literal 24-hour days about 6000 years ago and Adam is the original person and the originating head of humankind. Adam was the first person, created supernaturally by God and the father of all humankind. Numerous doctrines fall apart, Collins argues, if Adam wasn't literally the father of all humankind. The Bible presents a modern and accurate scientific understanding of the universe, argues Collins.

For more information on this discussion, see Matthew Barret and Ardel Caneday, *Four View on the Historical Adam* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2013).

GOD'S STORY: THE FLOOD - DIVINE INTERVENTION, THE BAD AND THE GOOD

What is God's story? What part do you have in it? Last week, we looked at how humans turned to a demonic spirit for divine knowledge instead of to God, and things didn't work out so well. This week, we'll look at more intervention from divine beings in human affairs, both bad and good.

Review

1. Before Creation: Leviathan, and Sons of God, and the Word
2. After Creation: identity, destiny, the serpent, and the exile

Seeds of the Cosmic War

1. Read Gen 3:15 God declares that the seed of the serpent will war against the seed of the woman.
2. This has both a spiritual and a physical meaning.
3. When we practice sin, we are spiritually the seed of the devil, instead of the seed of God. (1 John 3:8-12).
4. But there is also a physical component. The offspring of the Woman is singular. It's not a group of people. Today, we know it was Jesus, but at the time, everyone assumed the offspring was Abel.
5. Sin motivated Cain to kill Abel.

The Sons of God, their Human Wives, and the Giants

1. Read Genesis 6:1-4. We already know who the sons of God are, but let's review. The sons of God are divine members of God's household. One of the words the Bible uses to describe them is "Watchers." Some of the Watchers decided to leave their proper place in the heavenly realm and they came to earth.
2. Scholars are divided in just what happened exactly, but it's clear that these spiritual beings committed a terrible sin with human women. They violated God's cosmic order. Because of the sexual activity between the Watchers and the human women, the women gave birth to giants. These giants are the seed of the serpent, brought up to war against the seed of the woman.
3. These giants were the semi-divine beings of many myths in ancient cultures around the world. Let's expand on what happened.

The Book of Enoch

1. The Book of Enoch isn't in the Bible, but it's very important. It's a book that Jesus, the disciples and everyone who wrote the NT either read or were very familiar with. Several of the New Testament books refer to the Book of Enoch in various ways. It shaped how Jesus and the disciples thought about the

world. It's an ancient and influential book, even though it's not scripture. The Book of Enoch explores what happened in Gen 6:1-4. Let's examine it.

2. Read from 1 Enoch 6:1 - 8:2. (Read this loosely. Skip the names of the spirits. Focus on the sins and the consequences).

“And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: ‘Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children.’... And they were in all two hundred; who descended in the days of Jared on the summit of Mount Hermon, and they called it Mount Hermon, because they had sworn and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it.

And all the others together with them took unto themselves wives, and each chose for himself one, and they began to go in unto them and to defile themselves with them, and they taught them charms and enchantments, and the cutting of roots, and made them acquainted with plants. And they became pregnant, and they bare great giants, whose height was three thousand ells: Who consumed all the acquisitions of men. And when men could no longer sustain them, The giants turned against them and devoured mankind. And they began to sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish, and to devour one another's flesh, and drink the blood. Then the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones.

And Azâzêl taught men to make swords, and knives, and shields, and breastplates, and made known to them the metals of the earth and the art of working them, and bracelets, and ornaments, and the use of antimony, and the beautifying of the eyelids, and all kinds of costly stones, and all colouring tinctures. And there arose much godlessness, and they committed fornication, and they were led astray, and became corrupt in all their ways. Semjâzâ taught enchantments, and root-cuttings, Armârôs the resolving of enchantments, Barâqijâl, (taught) astrology, Kôkabêl the constellations, Ezêqêêl the knowledge of the clouds, âAraqiêl the signs of the earth, Shamsiêl the signs of the sun, and Sariêl the course of the moon. And as men perished, they cried, and their cry went up to heaven.”

(R. H. Charles and W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Book of Enoch* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917), Enoch 6:1–8:4.)

Notice what happened:

- *They swore an oath to violate God's divine order.*
 - *They descended onto Mount Hermon, a mountain in the north of Israel.*
 - *They sexually defiled human women and themselves, producing giant and wicked humans.*
 - *They taught occult (hidden) knowledge, weapon making, how to make women “more beautiful” – making them seductive sex objects – and sexual sin.*
 - *They consumed all natural resources.*
 - *They corrupting animals and humans*
 - *They drank human blood and consumed human flesh*
3. 1 Enoch goes onto describe how God locked up the Watchers in hell. They asked the a man named Enoch to approach God and ask God to release them. God denied their request, and Enoch went back to hell to tell them basically they're toast. Their plans to ruin God's creation failed.
 4. People in Jesus' day largely blamed the evil and human depravity on the Watcher's evil intervention in God's creation. One of Jesus' missions was to undo their damage.

5. These ideas continue today in vampire and zombie stories, genetic engineering, pursuing occult knowledge, advanced weapon making to kill and control others, turning girls and women into sex objects, and sexual perversion.
6. The actions of these sons of God were BAD divine intervention. To save creation, God had to respond with his own divine intervention. This began with the Flood, and concluded with Jesus.

God Responds

1. God decides to limit the age people can live. (Note: this number might be symbolic. 12x10, 12- symbolic of God's government and 10 symbolic of God's law.)
2. The Sin of the Watchers led to wickedness of all humans. Perhaps regular humans were wiped out – their blood drank and their flesh consumed. In other words, it was a vampire and zombie apocalypse. All of God's creation was about to be destroyed.
3. God decided to reboot creation. He unleashed the chaotic waters and then recreated the earth. In this process, God wiped the earth of all the depravity, while preserving humans and animals, so they could begin to fulfill God's plan to be productive and fill the earth with his divine image. God chose Noah to preserve uncorrupted humans and animals on the ark of safety.

The New Testament Perspective

1. Several New Testament writers refer to the ideas developed in Enoch. We will look at two of them.
2. 2 Peter 2:2-10. Peter is concerned with prophets that rely on demonic forces for divine knowledge and instruction, instead of relying on God. This happened before the Flood, and God did not spare those angels. He has locked them up in hell already, while saving his people. Jude 6-7 also references this.
3. 1 Peter 3:18-22: Peter links Jesus to Enoch. Remember that the Watchers asked Enoch to intercede for them, but God said no. So Enoch went to hell to tell them they had lost. In this passage, Peter sees Jesus as the new Enoch, with Jesus going to hell to preach to the spirits to tell them that they had still lost. Peter links baptism to this event. Each time someone is baptized, this is a public declaration of what has happened in his or her heart already. And it also declares to the Watchers that despite their evil intervention, they've lost another soul to Jesus Christ, who is victorious over them, and has authority over all angels and the watchers and every spiritual power.
4. The Flood was a cosmic reset. God unleashed the watery forces of chaos to overthrow the perversion. Afterwards, he reminded Noah that humans are the image of God and to go and live like it, on earth, even as God rules the heavens.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Interpretations of Genesis 6:1-4

The New Testament witness confirms the supernatural reading taught in this lesson. However, most churches in the West will attempt to deny this reading. The tradition of attempting to strip the supernatural out of this (and other) biblical passages goes back to the late fourth century. For a complete discussion on the various efforts, and their flaws, see *Unseen Realm*, Chapter 12 "Divine Transgressions" and Chapter 13, "The Bad Seed."

Can angels marry?

A common objection to reading Genesis 6:1-4 as it was meant to be read is Matthew 22:30 and parallel passages. Jesus discusses life between men and women in the resurrection, and mentioned they will not marry, just like the angels do not marry. Jesus does not say, "they cannot marry." Moreover, this further illustrates the divine transgression in Genesis 6:1-4, where the angels left their abode and marry. Throughout scriptures, angels

who manifest in our physical realm take on bodily form, and often do what bodies do, including eating and walking and wrestling and touching. Taking women as wives to bear giant offspring, however, transgresses God's order.

The Sin of the Watchers

According to Dr. Heiser, "the story of the sin of the Watchers not only informed the mass of Jews in the Second Temple Period about the meaning and significance of Genesis 6:1-4, but it also informed the New Testament writers who were a part of that period and community" (Heiser, *Reversing Hermon: Enoch the Watchers and the Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ*, Crane, MO: Defender, 2017, 32). While not widely discussed in most churches, it's important to understand this cultural backdrop of the New Testament. These ideas were fixed in the minds of the Jews during the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles.

The sin of the Watchers led to a variety of activities that promote lust, warfare, astrology and occult practices. This spiritual contagion imprints itself on humanity and human culture.

Origin of Demons

According to the Book of Enoch, the sin of the Watchers also led to the origin of demons: the disembodied spirits of the giants killed in the flood.

And now, the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, and on the earth shall be their dwelling. Evil spirits have proceeded from their bodies; because they are born from men, and from the holy Watchers is their beginning and primal origin; they shall be evil spirits on earth, and evil spirits shall they be called.

"As for the spirits of heaven, in heaven shall be their dwelling, but as for the spirits of the earth which were born upon the earth, on the earth shall be their dwelling.

And the spirits of the giants afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth, and cause trouble: they take no food, but nevertheless hunger and thirst, and cause offenses. And these spirits shall rise up against the children of men and against the women, because they have proceeded from them." Enoch 15:8-12.

In Jesus' time, this was the commonly accepted understanding of the origin of demons. The Sin of the Watchers led to the proliferation of demonic spirits across the world. Demonic forces still oppress humankind today.

Jesus demonstrated absolute authority and power, however, over all demonic forces, and he empowers his followers with this same authority and power. Thus, Jesus overturns the sin of the Watchers.

Watcher Imagery in Popular Culture

Our popular culture is awash with supernatural stories that mirror on some level the story told in Genesis 6:1-4 and expanded in the Book of Enoch (and elsewhere). We are surrounded by this imagery without knowing it.

For instance, a major movie studio is Paramount Pictures. The opening logo for Paramount shows stars falling from space to encircle a mountain. "Para - Mount" means "Supreme Mountain." The Book of Enoch describes the Stars of God descending from heaven to land on Mount Hermon. (Throughout the Bible, the Hebrews considered Mount Hermon the land of evil, the arch enemy of Mount Zion). By showing students a video clip of this image, they can begin to see how these ideas have been imprinted our own culture.

Additional reading: Michael S. Heiser. *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, the Watchers, and the Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ* (Crane: Defender Publishing, 2017).

GOD'S STORY: TOWER OF BABEL - EARTH INVADING HEAVEN

Review

1. Before Creation – Leviathan, the Sons of God, and the Word.
2. After Creation – Stolen identity and receiving divine knowledge from Satan, instead of God. This leads to sin, death, and suffering.
3. The Flood – Sons of God intervene, giving humans divine knowledge, leading to human depravity and suffering. God intervenes to reset Creation.

Nimrod

1. A man named Nimrod created an empire, the kingdom of Babel in the land of Shinar. Much later, his descendants of his empire would destroy the nation of Israel. He was the “first to become a mighty man.” This is the same word used to describe giants before the flood.
2. It's unclear what this means exactly. Maybe he became a sort of demi-god or a giant. Maybe he's symbolic of the enemies of God. His was the beginning of the Kingdom of Babel. Babylon will be symbolic of one of the great enemies of God throughout the rest of the Bible.
3. In Nimrod's land, they decide to build a Gate to God, and what happens next frames the entire rest of the Old Testament.

The Tower of Babel

1. Read Genesis 11:1-9. Babel means “Gate to God.” The idea is that humans would create their own way into heaven and force the gods to do what they wanted.
2. The Tower of Babel probably looked like a ziggurat. It's a temple, which is a building designed to be the house of a god, to force the god from heaven to earth. The top or inner sanctum of this temple was supposed to reach into heaven. This is supposed to be the space where heaven and earth intersected, where God lived on the earth. It's like the Garden of Eden again, devised on human terms, not God's terms. This is an attempt to invade heaven, and acquire divine knowledge on their own. God responds by creating languages, which caused people to form nations, and then they scattered to fill the earth.

The Gods of the Nations

1. Read Deut 32:7-8 in the ESV. God decides to “disinherit the nations.” God basically grants humans their desire. God decides that the people of the world will no longer be in relationship with him. They wouldn't be under his authority. Instead, he carved out territories for other nations and placed them under the authority of members of God's divine council, the sons of God.
2. God decided to create a new nation for himself: Israel.
3. Read Deut 4:19-20. The other nations were assigned to lesser gods as a judgement from God. It like God said, “If you don't want to obey me, I'm not interested in being your god—I'll match you up with some other god.” These lesser beings became the gods of the nations.

4. God's plan is to eventually win back these nations back to himself. Right after the Tower of Babel, God promises to form his nation from a man named Abram, and from him, all the nations will be blessed.

The Domain of Darkness

1. Over time, these lesser gods created a pantheon of wickedness over the entire world. The New Testament calls these beings spiritual rulers, cosmic powers over this present darkness, and spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places. In Colossians 1:13, Paul called this hierarchy of dark spirits the "Domain of Darkness."
2. Read Psalm 82. This Psalm sees that someday, God will judge these lesser gods. Because they have influenced the rulers of the nations with:
 - Wicked spirits favor injustice
 - Oppress the helpless, needy, sick and poor
 - Refuse to save the suffering from the wickedThe Domain of Darkness is a spiritual seed of the serpent, raised up to war against the seed of the woman. Do you see these effects in the world today?

Conclusion

The Tower of Babel incident again reveals what is wrong in the world:

1. Wicked spirits influencing the nations
2. Living according to our desires over God's desires
3. Believing lies about ourselves
4. Trusting other spirits instead of God for divine knowledge
5. Natural chaotic forces (Leviathan)

Who will set the world to rights again?

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Disinheriting the Nations

Some Bible translations, like the ESV, NRSV, NLT, etc., incorporate the most ancient textual tradition available (in this case, the Dead Sea Scrolls) to translate Deuteronomy 32:8. Over time, scribes changed this verse to say, "the sons of Israel", which of course makes no sense within the overall biblical narrative. The KJV, NIV, LEB and other translations retain this later textual tradition.

Exercise

To illustrate the disinheriting the nations, try this exercise.

1. Create placards with the names of pagan gods and nations on it: Zeus for Greece, Baal for Ugarit, Ra for Egypt, Marduk for Babylon, etc. Choose a number that makes sense for your group.
2. Assign one placard to a student. This student is the god. Have them stand in different parts of your teaching space.
3. You get to play Yahweh, the head of the council. Have all the other students be people building the

Tower of Babel.

4. Announce to them that they've gone far enough and you've had it with their constant rebellion. So you're assigning them to sons of God to create new nations.
5. One by one, send each student to a different god.

When all the students have been assigned, announce that you will be creating a new nation for your own, but each person will have to obey their new god.

Namaan

In 2 Kings 5, we read about a Syrian general named Naaman, who had leprosy. He came to a prophet of Israel to get healed, and the prophet healed him. He was so grateful that he did this: read 2 Kings 5:17. Why does Naaman take some Israeli dirt home with him? Because his land was given to other gods, but he wants to worship Yahweh, so he takes some of the land that Yahweh has reserved for himself. Perhaps he spread it out so he could kneel or stand on it to worship Yahweh. This episode illustrates the idea that certain land had been assigned to different gods.

Assyrians Repopulate Samaria

After the Assyrians destroy Israel, they brought new people to live there. But this land had been claimed by Yahweh, and Yahweh sent lions to kill some of them. The Assyrian king recognized that they needed Yahweh's laws to have peace in the land. So he had some of Yahweh's priests teach the people the "law of the god of the land." This episode reflects that the idea that each god had land assignments was widespread. Read about this account in 2 Kings 17: 24-41.

The Supplemental Lesson

"What's Your Sign" on page 28 syncs nicely with the ideas in this lesson.

GOD'S STORY: THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

Review

1. Before Creation – Leviathan, the sons of God, and the Word.
2. After Creation – Stolen identity, gaining divine knowledge through believing the lies Satan instead of the truth of God. Heaven (Eden) retreats from Earth.
3. The Flood – Sons of God gave divine knowledge to humans, leading to vast depravity and the Flood. God intervenes to reset Creation.
4. Tower of Babel – humans try to get divine knowledge by earth invading heaven. The nations are put under other spiritual forces: the Domain of Darkness. Is all hope for heaven on earth lost?

The Creation of Israel

1. God decides to create a new nation out of nothing. This nation will be his own. He begins by making some promises to Abram and his wife Sarai. He changes their name to Abraham and Sarah, and in their old age, they miraculously conceive a child. From this child, over some centuries, several tribes grow. They migrate to Egypt and become slaves. Through Moses, God delivers these tribes and unites them by creating the nation of Israel.
2. Read Exodus 19:5-6. God's intends to form a holy nation of priests. A priest is someone who stands between people and God. God's plan is to have this nation of Israel to represent God to the other nations, in hopes that other people will come to Israel to learn about God, and then choose to worship him. Israel says no! The people of Israel get afraid, and only one of the 12 tribes agrees to be priests.
3. To seal the agreement between God and Israel, God made a covenant, and sealed the agreement in an Ark. This covenant said that if Israel would do certain things, God would bless and protect them. But if they didn't do those things, God wouldn't. These certain things are called The Law.
4. After creating this new nation, they invade and cleanse the promised land of demonic forces, and establish the nation in the Land of Israel.

War Between God and the gods

1. The history of Israel is the history of a war between the Domain of Darkness (the seed of the serpent), and the children of Israel (the seed of the woman). The gods of the nations want to destroy the Kingdom of God on earth. The gods rose up more giants to populate the land promised to Israel, to destroy the people of God. Part of the Conquest involved cleansing the land of these giants and all worship to these other gods.
2. Israel takes a few centuries to cleanse the land, but eventually, under King David, they are successful.
3. King David replaced Saul. David finished cleansing the land of demonic forces, and refocused the priests to begin the sacrifice of worship. This represented a fundamental shift in how Israel followed God. The result, God granted David's desire to build an earthly home for God: a Temple.
4. To celebrate cleansing the land, David wants to build God a temple. A temple is God's house on earth. It's where heaven and earth intersect. The other nations had houses for their gods, so David wanted a house for Yahweh. God says that's fine, but says David has too much blood on his hands, so it would be David's son, King Solomon, who would build God's house on earth.

The Kingdom of God On Earth

1. Under King Solomon, it looked like God's plans to set up the Kingdom of God on earth was going to work.
2. Here's what it looks like. Read select portions of 1 Kings 4:20-34
 - The people of God were fruitful and multiplied – they had huge population growth.
 - They ate, drank and were happy.
 - Solomon ruled over all the lands promised to Abraham.
 - The economy boomed.
 - The nation had peace on all sides.
 - There was no crime.
 - Every family had its own vineyard and food.
 - The government had a very big army with advanced weapon systems to protect the people.
 - No one – not even animals – went hungry
 - The King had an amazing mind. He was smarter than the smartest and wisest men in the world.
 - He spoke 3000 proverbs and wrote 1005 songs
 - He learned and about botany, biology, and zoology.
 - The people of the nations came to Israel to learn about God.

The Kingdom Fails

1. Solomon took 7 years to build God's temple. Seven is the biblical number of completion or perfection. Then, Solomon took 13 years to build his own house. Thirteen is the biblical number of rebellion. Things went downhill quickly.
2. After Solomon, a civil war ripped the nation of Israel into Israel and Judah. Over time, Israel and Judah turned away from Yahweh and began to follow other gods. A few centuries later, Israel was destroyed and Judah sent into Exile. Did the gods of the other nations defeat God and prevent heaven from coming to earth?

Again, we see the causes of evil in the world.

1. Wicked spirits influencing the nations
2. Living by our desires first over God's desires
3. Believing lies about who we really are
4. Turning to other spirits for divine knowledge instead of God
5. Natural chaotic forces

The prophets promise that someday a new king would come to set the world to rights again. In our next lesson, we'll look at how.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Creation of Israel

See *Unseen Realm*, Chapters 16 through 22.

Giants After the Flood

If the flood killed the giants, why were there giants after the flood? Scripture isn't clear, but there are many possible scenarios to explain why the land was populated with giants. Perhaps what occurred at Genesis 6:1-4 happened again. Perhaps the flood wasn't global, so not all the giants were killed. The biblical writers' point is that the gods of the nations rose up clans of wicked giants and had them waiting in the land set apart for God's people, to thwart God's plans. While Israel defeated the giants, ultimately, they began following those other gods, which ultimately led to their destruction.

The Conquest: Cleansing the Land of Giants

The violence described in Israel's conquest of the Promised Land has troubled many Christians. However, with a supernatural worldview of the Bible, readers can see that the giants in the land were part of the cosmic conflict between God and the other gods. Cleansing the land of demonic influence is key to establishing a land where God can rule and people live in peace.

GOD'S STORY: THE CLOUD RIDER

Review

1. Before Creation – Leviathan, the sons of God, and the Word.
2. After Creation – Stolen identity, gaining divine knowledge through believing the lies of Satan instead of the truth of God. Heaven (Eden) retreats from Earth.
3. The Flood – Sons of God gave divine knowledge to humans, leading to vast depravity and the Flood. God intervenes to reset Creation.
4. Tower of Babel – humans try to get divine knowledge by earth invading heaven. The nations are put under other spiritual forces: the Domain of Darkness.
5. Kingdom of Israel - God forms Israel to represent him, but it fails. First it splits in a civil war. Then the two kingdoms are destroyed by the Assyrian Empire and the Babylonian Empire. We are left with a promise that someday God will send a King to destroy Leviathan and set the world to rights again.

The Divine Council

1. A few lessons ago, we began talking about the Divine Council. God created divine and human beings. Divine beings operate in the spiritual realm. Humans operate in the physical realm. We often think of divine beings as angels, but it's much more complicated than that. These are spiritual beings that God created and they are powerful, but not every member of the divine council is of the same rank. God expects these divine beings to run his spiritual government. They sometimes sit in a council with God at the head of it, and they decide things. Where the Divine Council met was sometimes called heaven, sometimes the Garden of God or the Garden of Eden or the Mountain of God. Let's look at a couple of examples of the Divine Council in operation.
2. 1Kings 22. King Ahab is an evil king who wants to launch an attack against the Syrians, and he is hoping his prophets will tell him he will win that battle. His prophets are false prophets, and they tell him what he wants to hear. Then Ahab asks a prophet of God. Verses 19-23 is what the prophet sees: a meeting of God and his Divine Council. God had decided it was time for Ahab to die. God asks the host of heaven how Ahab's death should be accomplished. The council debated the matter until one of the spiritual beings had a proposition. God approved and sent the spirit to do the deed.
3. Whenever a human sat in the Divine Council, he was considered a prophet.

The Cloud Rider

1. In the Ancient Near East, everyone knew that someone who rode the clouds is a deity. In the land north of Israel, the god Baal rode the clouds. He brought the rain and "the one who rides the clouds" was his official name. In the Old Testament, Baal was one of the chief causes for Israel to worship other gods. But the Bible wants us to know that it's not really Baal who rides the clouds, it's Yahweh, the true God of Israel.
2. Read Deut 33:26, Psalms 68:32-33, Psalms 104:1-4, Isaiah 19:1-4. Each of these shows that it's Yahweh, the God of Israel who rides the clouds. In Daniel 7:9-10, God takes a seat in his throne and his heavenly court takes a seat also. Read Daniel 7:13-14. Then came a man riding on the clouds to stand before God. This man was given dominion and glory and a kingdom to rule over all nations. And the kingdom will not be destroyed and will last forever.

3. In Daniel 7:9-10, God takes a seat in his throne and his heavenly court takes a seat also. Read Daniel 7:13-14. Then came a man riding not he clouds to stand before God. This man was given dominion and glory and a kingdom to rule over all nations. And the kingdom will not be destroyed and will last forever.
4. In Daniel 7, a son of man is riding the clouds. “Son of Man” means “Human one.” When a human one sat in the Divine Council, he was called a prophet. But here, the vision has a human prophet riding the clouds: he is a human prophet who is also God, who comes before God on the throne. There are two persons there, but one God. And the man who is God is given God’s Kingdom to rule on earth and it will last forever.

Jesus the Cloud Rider

1. Jesus was fully human. He preached that the Kingdom of God was nearby. The Kingdom of God is the dynamic rule and reign of God. It’s the activity of God’s government on earth. Jesus said that God’s rule was starting on earth, and he proved it by casting out demons and healing the sick.
2. On several occasions, Jesus claimed that he was Yahweh in human form: he was God in Man. He said he was divine.
3. In John 10:34-38, Jesus explicitly says that he is the Lord of the Divine Council: he is God! The Jews who were listening to him were so angry at this claim, they sought to kill him. A human claiming to be God would be punishable by death.
4. Eventually Jesus is arrested and tried. They can’t actually convict him of any crime. So Jesus gives them what they need. Read Matthew 26:63-66

And the high priest said to him, “I put you under oath by the living God, that you tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God!”

Jesus said to him, “You have said it. But I tell you, **from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.**”

Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have just now heard the blasphemy! What do you think?”

And they answered and said, “He deserves death!” (LEB, emphasis added)

They crucify him, but God confirmed Jesus’ claim to deity by resurrecting him from the dead. And now Jesus lives today sitting at the right hand of power, having been given a Kingdom that will last forever and ever. We’ll talk about that in the next message.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Divine Council, See *Unseen Realm*, Chapters 3 through 9.

Prophets: Humans Standing in the Council, See *Unseen Realm*, Chapter 27.

The Cloud Rider, See *Unseen Realm*, Chapter 29.

Visual Illustrations

Visual representations of these ideas may add to the sense of awe conveyed by Jesus being the Cloud Rider. This awe can be conveyed with a clip from the movie *Independence Day*, of the space ship shrouded in clouds moving across the skies of the Middle East or across New York City. Similarly, in the recent film *War of the Worlds*, an effective scene is when Tom Hanks character and his daughter exit their home to watch with their neighbors the clouds in the sky.

GOD'S STORY: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

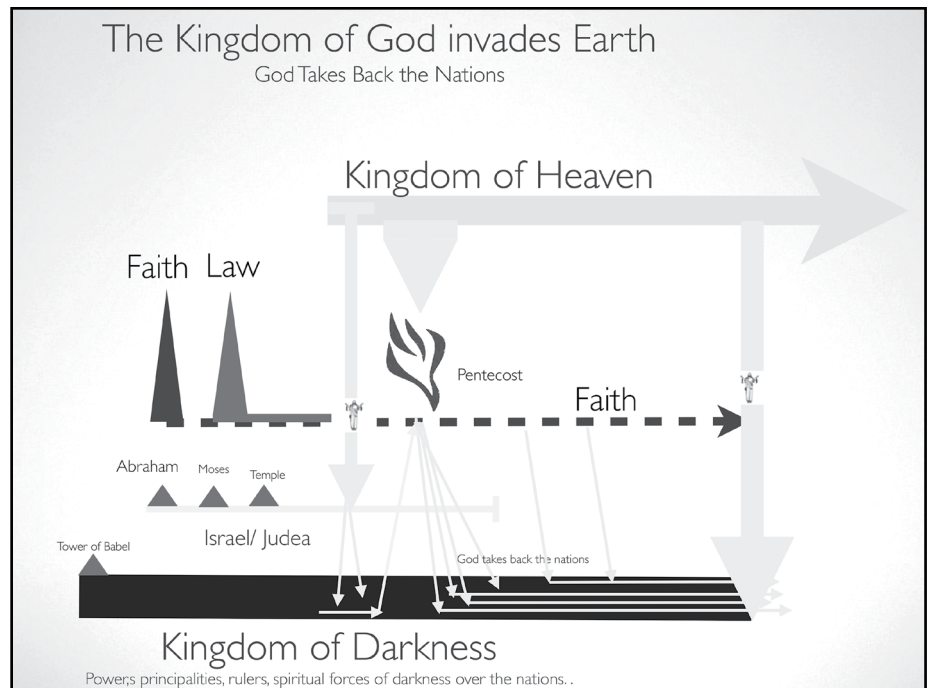
Review

1. Leviathan, the Sin of Adam, and the Sin of the Watchers
2. After the Tower of Babel, God “dis-inherited” the nations and put them under the influence of lesser spiritual beings – powerful spirits. These spiritual powers eventually formed the Domain of Darkness, a hierarchy of spiritual powers that ruled the earth. The nations scattered across the world. The Bible lists them, and they scattered from Babylon to Spain.
2. God formed a new nation to represent him. His plan was that people could come to Israel and learn about him. Israel didn't uphold its end of the bargain, and so God did the same thing with them as he did in Babel. God divorced them, and scattered the Jews all across the nations. They inhabited basically all the nations listed in the Tower of Babel incident.
4. God promised that a Prophet and King who was also God would come and establish God's Kingdom on earth, and it would expand and last forever.

Heaven's Invasion

1. Four centuries after God scattered Israel across all the nations, the Roman Empire covered the known world. For the first time in history, you could safely travel from Babylon to Spain - the same nations specifically mentioned after the Tower of Babel incident.
2. The Word of God set aside his divinity, and was born to a human mother: Jesus Christ. Jesus had a secret mission: to bring the Kingdom of God to earth.
3. In our lessons so far, we've learned the causes of everything that has gone wrong in the world.

- Human sin
- Wicked spirits influencing people
- People putting their desires first
- Trusting other spirits rather than God
- Leviathan still causing chaos
- Yahweh decided enough was enough, and came to earth as a human to overturn all of that!



4. Jesus began his ministry by declaring that the Kingdom of God was near. This means the dominion of the King was invading earth. Wherever Jesus went, he proved it. He brought a piece of heaven where he went. He cast out demons. He healed the sick. He forgave sins. He fed the hungry. Jesus announced his mission in Luke 4:18-19. Compare it to Psalm 82. His mission is exactly the opposite what the Domain of Darkness pursues!
5. First Jesus did the works of the Kingdom of God. Then, he trained 12 people to do what he did. And then he trained 70 people. Jesus picked 70 because this is the number of nations listed in the Tower of Babel. He signaled he was taking back the nations God disinherited at Babel.
6. One day, Jesus took his team to Mount Hermon, the heart of darkness and the gate of hell, and he said, "On this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Mount Hermon was the mountain where the Watchers descended in Genesis 6:1-4, which had led to such depravity and suffering. Jesus took some of his disciples up the mountain and read what happened. Read Mark 9:2-8. Jesus revealed his divinity. Moses and Elijah appeared. Moses represents the Old Testament Law and Elijah represents the Old Testament Prophets: these two witnesses testified to Jesus. God removed the Law and the Prophets, and said to listen to Jesus: he is God's perfect image on earth.
7. He died on the cross. The Jews and Romans did not kill Jesus. The spiritual forces behind them killed Jesus. Humans are not our enemies. The spiritual forces of darkness that influence people to do bad things are our enemy. God proved Jesus was who he said he was by raising him from the dead. This proved Jesus was victorious over death, sin, and all the wicked spirits. He then said to wait in Jerusalem for power to go and reclaim the nations. Then Jesus ascended into heaven.

Pentecost

1. A few days after Jesus ascended to heaven, the Jews celebrated a holiday called Pentecost. Jews from every nation came to Jerusalem to celebrate it. Read Acts 2:1-11. Luke mentions the list of nations because he wants us to know that the Jews in many nations mentioned in the Tower of Babel incident were present. In fact, the nations mentioned mostly overlap. Luke wrote "divided tongues", and these are the same words used in the Old Testament to describe the Tower of Babel situation (the Septuagint versions of Genesis 11 and Deuteronomy 32:8). These areas basically overlap (except for Spain. Paul mentions in Romans he's going to Spain to make sure they aren't left out).
2. After people from all these nations hear them speaking in tongues, Peter stands up and teaches them about Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Thousands choose to enter the Kingdom of God, and they went back to their nations to start churches. And these churches begin to grow.
3. The rest of Acts describes how the disciples visit almost all of these nations, preaching about Jesus and the Kingdom of God, ushering people out of the Domain of Darkness and into the Kingdom of Jesus.
4. This story continues today, and so we continue their mission, to spread the Kingdom... until Jesus comes back.
5. Today, we live still live in the Tension of the Kingdoms. The Kingdom of God is battling the Domain of Darkness. This is a serious war, which the Kingdom of God will win completely, but the Domain of Darkness still impacts the world. One of the real reasons that evil still happens is because of this tension between the Kingdom of God and the Domain of Darkness. When evil triumphs, the Domain of Darkness has won a battle. Who has God sent against the Domain of Darkness as agents of the Kingdom of God?
6. God is populating his government with new sons and daughters of God. He wants his new sons and daughters to represent God to the rest of the world. When people look at them, they see what God is like.

Maybe you have already made the decision to be a part of God's family and government. Are you acting like it? Maybe you are still in the Domain of Darkness. If so, then it's time to come into the light, to the winning team, and join the Holy Spirit in revealing Jesus to the world.

Conclusion

In this series, we have examined from a very high level God's story. We've learned the causes of evil and God's solution to evil. We see that we live in a cosmic conflict, and God is calling you to be his representative, a member of God's Kingdom on earth, rescuing others from the Domain of Darkness, one soul at a time. You are God's representative, and he has destined you to rule with God on earth. Will you accept his call on your life?

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to share God's story. I invite you to dive deeper into the Bible and look for these story points. As you do, the Bible will become more alive and more relevant than ever before. Oh, and one more thing: I hope you have found your place in God's supernatural plan. If not, what's holding you back? God's calling you to a great adventure, a life of meaning and purpose and victory.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Demonstrating the Tension of the Kingdoms

One effective way to easily demonstrate the Tension of the Kingdoms is through two arrows. The bottom arrow is the Domain of Darkness. About halfway across, the top arrow starts, reflecting the Kingdom of God. Eventually the Domain of Darkness will be utterly defeated, but until then, we continue in the tension where one arrow is on top of the other. See the included chart.

These arrows can be demonstrated with your body. Hold your arms straight out in front of you, and then bend them at the elbows across your body, with your right arm above and parallel to the left arm. Position your right hand so it is above the left wrist. The bottom arm represents the timeline of the Domain of Darkness, with your elbow representing the Tower of Babel, and the tip of your left palm the end, when Jesus comes again in the future. The top arm represents the Kingdom of God, with the finger tips representing Jesus' first coming, and continuing into eternity. Eventually the Domain of Darkness will cease, but until then, we live in the tension. This is a simple demonstration of why evil still occurs.

Once during youth group, during an unrelated message, a middle school student interrupted me to ask why evil existed if God is good. I hesitated, and said, it was complicated. A student in the back of the room – one whom I didn't think really paid attention to these lessons – held out her bent arms in front of her, hand over wrist, pointing in opposite direction. I smiled, and said, "I guess it's not that complicated."

Mount Hermon, On the Mountain of Transfiguration being Mount Hermon, see *Unseen Realm*, Chapter 32.

Overlap of Babel and Pentecost, See *Unseen Realm*, Chapter 34.

The Kingdom of God, See *Unseen Realm*, Chapters 36 to 41.

WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?

What's Your Sign?

1. Who knows what your sign is? (Use some examples from the newspaper or other source).
2. Another way of asking “what’s your sign?” is “Who controls your destiny?”
3. What happens is, an astrologer examines the stars, and determines, sometimes using spirits to help her, what your destiny is for a day, depending on when you were born and what the stars are doing now.

What Are Astrological Signs?

1. Astronomy is the science of celestial objects and space. Astrology is the study of how celestial objects determine your destiny. Our astrological sign is determined by whichever constellation the sun is rising in when you’re born. The idea is that gods are behind the constellations, and so god behind the constellation you’re born under determines your destiny.
2. A German sociologist named Theodore Adorno had some really interesting things to say about popular culture. In the 1950s, he wrote a series of essays about horoscopes, called ‘The Stars Come Down to Earth.’ He examined horoscopes from several years in the Los Angeles Times, and he drew some conclusions from them. He described them as Organized Fortune Telling. He said Astrology is the most rational of the occult. Horoscopes are part of the occult - using demons to reveal secret knowledge. He said the prophecies pretend to derive from facts.
3. After studying these for a few years, Adorno said horoscopes were based on the assumption that people live their lives in terror. They’re always threatened. People are mildly paranoid, and they are seeking help from outside forces. He said basically, all the meanings of the horoscopes come down to “behave yourself” and “everything will be just fine!”
4. Adorno argues that reading the horoscopes over a long period of time trains people to be exploited. It trains people to not take responsibility for their actions, because everything is determined in the stars. It denies that people have free will, and their destiny is not up to them. Our everyday language reinforces this... “the stars are aligned!” It reinforces their dependence on someone else.
5. Adorno, who was a German Jew, linked occultism to fascism. He said, when God is denied, people will believe any lie. That’s a secular view, that astrology is based on mechanical laws, about which planet is in which constellation, and how that controls your destiny.

What Astrologers Believe

1. Astrologers don’t believe that astrology is based on mechanical laws. Astrology goes back thousands of years. It’s the occult religion that real spiritual forces behind the stars determine your destiny. These spirit forces in the ancient past were recognized as gods. Gods with real influence.
2. So when you say, “I’m a Taurus,” that’s a sign over your head declaring that that god Taurus determines your destiny. When someone asks, “What’s your sign?”, are you giving them the name of a god? All of the signs of the zodiacs are gods.

What the Bible Teaches

1. In Genesis 1:14, God says the stars were put in heaven to help us know the seasons. This makes sense because there are 12 obvious constellations that pass through the sky, one per month. These 12 constellations make up the zodiac. The zodiac goes back to the very beginning. Job, the oldest book in the bible, mentions it as a means to tell the time of year.
2. But the other nations believed gods were behind the constellations. Read Deut 4:15, 19-20. God says he assigned to members of his heavenly host power and authority over all the nations of the world, except Israel... God's people. Moses tells the people of Israel do not start looking to the stars or the heavenly host for guidance. Because God determines your destiny, not the pagan gods. This thought is explained again in Deut 32:8, and then in verse 17, Moses explains these gods are actually demons.
3. These demons make up the Domain of Darkness. They dominate the earth. Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of God, to topple these demons and put the earth back under God's rule and reign. Demonic entities loyal to Satan make up the Kingdom of Darkness and are at war with us.
4. Read Ephesians 6:12. If you declare your horoscope sign, you are declaring your destiny is attached to a demon.

Let Jesus Determine Your Destiny

1. Read Col 1:13. This says that Jesus has taken you from the destiny of demons, and given you his destiny.
2. Read Col 2:15. This says that Jesus has defeated these demonic forces. We aren't under their authority, but under Jesus'. He controls our destiny.
3. Read Ex 17:15. Someone must have asked Moses what his sign is, because this is what he says.
4. Read Song 6:4: And God is love, so in Song of Solomon, he declares God's sign over us is love.
5. The constellation in the sky on your birthday doesn't control your destiny. Some demon doesn't control your daily fortunes. My destiny was not written in the stars a million miles away. Demonic prophecies over me don't matter. They are of no effect. When people ask me: what's your sign? I say, "Well, my sign is Jesus. He controls my destiny."

ICE BREAKERS

Small group discussions are often more successful by starting with an ice breaker.
Each person should have an opportunity to participate.

QUESTIONS

1. If you had a time machine that would work only once, what point in the future or time in history would you visit? If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
2. If your house were burning down, what three objects would you try and save?
3. If you could talk to any one person now living, who would it be and why?
4. Name a gift you will never forget?
5. What's your favorite thing to do in the summer?
6. Who's your favorite cartoon character, and why?
7. What is the hardest thing you have ever done?
8. What was the best thing that happened to you this past week?
9. If you had this week over again what would you do differently?
10. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about God?
11. What's the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?
12. If you could ask Christ to change one problem in the world today, what would you like him to change?

GAMES

Fact or Fiction

Ask everyone to write on a piece of paper THREE things about themselves which may not be known

to the others in the group. Two are true and one is not. Taking turns they read out the three 'facts' about themselves and the rest of the group votes which are true and false.

Interview

Divide the young people into pairs. Ask them to take three minutes to interview each other. Each interviewer has to find 3 interesting facts about their partner. Bring everyone back to together and ask everyone to present the 3 facts about their partner to the rest of the group. Watch the time on this one, keep it moving along.

My Name Is?

Go around the group and ask each young person to state his/her name and attach an adjective that not only describes a dominant characteristic, but also starts with the same letter of his name e.g. generous Grahame, dynamic Dave. Write them down and refer to them by this for the rest of the evening.

Desert Island

Announce, 'You've been exiled to a deserted island for a year. In addition to the essentials, you may take one piece of music, one book (which is not the Bible) and one luxury item you can carry with you i.e. not a boat to leave the island! What would you take and why?'

If...

Ask the group to sit in a circle. Write 20 'IF' questions on cards and place them (question down) in the middle of the circle. The first person takes a card, reads it out and gives their answer, comment or explanation. The card is returned to the bottom of the pile before the next person takes their card.

If Questions:

1. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
2. If I gave you \$10,000, what would you spend it on?
3. If you could watch your favorite movie now, what would it be?
4. If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be?
5. If you could wish one thing to come true this year, what would it be?
6. If you could live in any period of history, when would it be?
7. If you could change anything about yourself, what would you change?
8. If you could be someone else, who would you be?
9. If you could have any question answered, what would it be?
10. If you could watch your favorite TV show now, what would it be?
11. If you could have any kind of pet, what would you have?
12. If you could do your dream job 10 years from now, what would it be?
13. If you had to be allergic to something, what would it be?
14. If you sat down next to Jesus on a bus, what would you talk about?
15. If money and time was no object, what would you be doing right now?
16. If you had one day to live over again, what day would you pick?
17. If you could eat your favorite food now, what would it be?
18. If you could learn any skill, what would it be?
19. If you were sent to live on a space station for three months and only allowed to bring three personal items with you, what would they be?
20. If you could buy a car right now, what would you buy?

Name That Person

Divide into two teams. Give each person a blank piece of card. Ask them to write five little known facts about themselves on their card.

Collect the cards into two team piles. Draw one card from the opposing team pile. Each team tries to name the person in as few clues as possible. Five points if they get it on the first clue, then 4, 3, 2, 1, 0. The team with the most points wins.

Would You Rather

1. Visit the doctor or the dentist?
2. Eat broccoli or carrots?
3. Watch TV or listen to music?
4. Own a lizard or a snake?
5. Have a beach holiday or a mountain holiday?
6. Be an apple or a banana?

Would You Rather (Continued)

7. Be invisible or be able to read minds?
8. Be hairy all over or completely bald?
9. Be the most popular or the smartest person you know?
10. Make headlines for saving somebody's life or winning a Nobel Prize?
11. Go without television or fast food for the rest of your life?
12. Be handsome/beautiful and dumb or be ugly and really smart?
13. Always be cold or always be hot?
14. Not hear or not see?

Tall Stories

The leader starts a story with a sentence that ends in SUDDENLY. The next person then has to add to the story with his own sentence that ends in SUDDENLY. Continue the story until everyone has contributed. The story becomes crazier as each person adds his or her sentence. Tape it and play it back.

Word Link

The first person starts with any word they wish i.e. red. The next person repeats the first word and adds another word which links to the first i.e. tomato. The next person repeats the previous word and add another word link i.e. soup, and so on. To keep this moving, only allow five seconds for each word link.

Add Words

The first person says a word, for example 'The'. The second person says the first word and ADDS a second word of their choice, and so on. At the end you might have a complete sentence!

Knots

Form a small circle. Ask them to extend their right hand across the circle and hold the left hand of the other team member opposite them. Then extend their left hand across the circle and hold the right hand of another group member. The task is to unravel the spider's web of interlocking arms without letting go of anyone's hands.

GOD'S STORY

Discovering **YOUR** Part In God's SUPERNATURAL Plan

This 7-week study will take you and your students on an adventure for the ages. Viewed through the supernatural worldview of the Bible, your students will encounter the dramatic cosmic conflict revealed from the ancient past through tomorrow. Through these potent lessons, your students will engage the Bible like never before. By challenging your students to be biblically thoughtful, culturally relevant and spiritually powerful, they will become equipped with a mindset that makes sense of the world we live in.

Get prepared for a journey that will be life transformative!



ABOUT DOUG OVERMYER

Douglas R. Overmyer is the founder of Seers See Ministries, which seeks to frame certain supernatural events that some people experience within a biblical worldview. Douglas was raised by Christian parents and grew up attending a church founded by his great grandfather. While working in both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors, he has served as a leader in three church plants, where he learned firsthand how to equip those who have encountered the supernatural with the Kingdom of God. A graduate of Eastern Illinois University and the School of Kingdom Ministry, Douglas lives in Illinois with his wife Amy and their three children.

To order additional copies of this resource or correlating student workbooks, please write to Seers See Ministries, 1400 Champaign Avenue, Mattoon, IL 61938 Email your order at: dougovermyer@mailbox.org or order on-line at www.seerssee.com.