

# Sod

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*An Investigation Into the Cosmological Mechanics for Divine Governance  
by the God of Heaven through His Divine Council.*

## Introduction

There is more than one reason for this study, but perhaps the most important is because it is a phenomenon the Christian community must learn to recognize. It must be recognized because it affects how the universe of God is ultimately viewed. Due to its historical lack of recognition by the Church in general there have been tremendous chasms created prohibiting proper exegesis of vital passages of scripture pertaining to the God of Israel. A prominent example is the Genesis and Isaiah plurals e.g. “*Let us*”. Another result stemming from the ignorance of this subject is the denial of other “gods” because of its perceived threat to strict monotheism. There are greater threats to monotheism than the existence of literal “pagan gods”.<sup>1</sup>

There are three terms used designating the council: *edah*, *qahal* and *sod*:

- ✿ *Edah* means congregation, company or assembly, and is used to identify the company of Israel.
- ✿ *Qahal* means simply “to gather together”. It is a word that parallels the Greek word *ekklesia* translated into English as “church”.
- ✿ *Sod* is a word that means council and counsel. It has other senses in which it is used as well. In this examination, the focus will be on its use in the imagery of God’s council.

Even though council imagery is found all through the pages of the sacred texts, there have been those who eschew this subject because of a perceived threat to monotheism. Perhaps the words of Paul communicate this best, “*For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist*” 1 Cor. 8:5-6. The theology of Israel’s divine council took the power of the foreign god’s and made them subservient to *Yahweh* their God. Israel worshipped only One God but did not deny the existence of other gods (*henotheism*), but rather their lack of power when compared to *their* God.

The way the “gods” were viewed in ancient times (such as the times when the biblical records were being written down) is different than how they are viewed today. The idea of greater and lesser deities who fight for control and whose job it is to push back the chaos of the cosmos has been all been forgotten in modern times. The realm of the “gods” has always been seen to directly affect the world of men (e.g. Rev. 12:12, “*Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you*”). It is the realm of the “gods” that controls and shapes the corporeal world.

The Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament are collections of Jewish writing by men of God over the years, divinely guided and inspired for instructing the people of God of Him and His ways. In order to see the message contained in this collection of writing it is vital to understand the context and culture from which it is written. The eastern writers communicated through concrete cultural and picture language, not the philosophical abstractions that became a dominant fixture through the influence of Hellenism.

It is therefore the intention of this examination to make the natural theology reflected in the literary device of the council accessible in the following ways:

1. Look at the God of Heaven’s relationship to other “gods” (*elohim*).
2. Understand the interpretation of the Genesis and Isaiah plurals from a cultural perspective and expose the traditional fallacy.

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<sup>1</sup> This threat is best known as “Trinitarianism”.

3. Hear from several prophets' "throne visions" with hopes of better understanding the majesty created in the minds of the original readers/listeners.
4. See the "Son of Man's relationship to the Divine Council.

There has been precious little attention given to this subject which holds great implications all through the sacred text. There are few examinations that can shed as much light on the God of Israel and His relationship to the Sons of God and Sons of Men. Interest escalated in the late 1920's due to uncovering the cuneiform tablets in the ancient Phoenician city Ras Shamra of the Ugarit. Ugraitic expressions such as "council of El", "of the gods", "assembly of the sons of El", "Sons of [the] God[s]" are among the phrases found as parallels in the Hebrew Scriptures.

## Definition

*"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."* Eph 6:12

The Hebrew Scriptures tell of a ruling body where the God of Heaven sits on a throne as the supreme deity over an assembly of lesser supernatural beings who are agents in carrying out His divine purposes and plans. Just as a "castle" is a description that would bring a certain picture to mind, so indeed is "throne".

The imagery reflected in the biblical accounts is to be seen as depictions of realities of the Divine world. This in one sense may be characterized as symbology, analogy or metaphor, but the thing to realize is that such a council does indeed exist.

The attendants have offices they hold and duties which are preformed at the behest of the Almighty One. It is possibly the most extensive cosmological symbol in the entirety of scripture, having its origins deep in the Mesopotamian and Sumerian histories. It is also of primary interest to any Christological inquiry due to the fact that the most quoted passage of scripture as to the Messianic identity being tied to Jesus of Nazareth comes from Psalm 110 which depicts this same council imagery.

While these ancient civilizations had their own views of a divine council, Israel's understanding was quite distinct from those foreign pantheons. It is evident that Israel envisioned a divine assembly or host who was under the direct influence and authority of *Yahweh*, their God. The practical functions of the council communicate many attributes of God's governing authority which fall into the categories of Judge, Warrior and King. As such, He is "alone" in the sense that He exercises complete power over all others and does not have to compete for control. Divine agency is naturally communicated in conjunctive efforts as the God of Heaven does His bidding in and through emissarial means, originating in the council chambers of *Yahweh*. "[The divine council is] the heavenly host, the pantheon of divine beings who administer the affairs of the cosmos. All ancient Mediterranean cultures had some conception of a divine council. The divine council of Israelite religion, known primarily through the psalms, was distinct in important ways."<sup>2</sup>

The presence of a divine council is attested by numerous literary works. In the Hebrew Bible the prophetic, poetic, historical, instructional and narrative passages declare its prevalence. The same imagery pervades the New Testament documents as well. There are several "throne visions" seen in the NT and it could be argued that the book of Revelation is mostly comprised of a "throne room vision".

At this point a clarification must be made regarding the pagan world of the time. There are parallels seen in religious cults from ancient times even up to the second temple era. Some critics have used this as a supposed proof that Christianity and Judaism upon which it is built are fabrications or alterations of the religious

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<sup>2</sup> Heiser, Michael S. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, & Writings*; ed. Tremper Longman and Peter Enns; InterVarsity Press, 2008

mythology and symbology that already existed from antiquity. This point only solidifies the existence of the Divine Council. For example, God told Moses to build the Tabernacle in the “pattern shown”.<sup>3</sup> There is archaeological evidence that the general outline, size and ratio was already known in the religious world of the Egyptians. Was this a copy-cat operation? Moses made a “mere copy” (Heb. 9) according to what he was shown. In the same sense, there is no foreseeable reason for failing to acknowledge that the pagan deities (sons of God) have not seen and made a copy of the same heavenly reality.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, there are men who find themselves in the presence of this divine council. These men are known as the prophets. They are given the privilege of listening in on council sessions and even participating on certain occasions. They are given instruction, warning and other necessary guidelines to handle specific situations for which they had been sent. They are given messages to deliver to God’s people and due to having stood in God’s council or throne room, carried unique authentication. God’s council being an image of significance, it was the theological stage upon which the NT authors would present Jesus as sitting on a throne at the right hand of God as the eschatological Messianic King and vice-regent.

## Terminology

### Understanding *elohim*

There has been much confusion regarding the term *elohim*. It must be understood as a generic title rather than a proper name. The word *elohim* is used about 2500 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and depending on the context is translated: God, god, gods, goddess or human judges/agents. The title is used in the Hebrew Scriptures in the following ways:

- ✿ *Yahweh*, the God of Israel over 2000 times
- ✿ Attendants in the Divine Council of *Yahweh* (e.g. Ps 82, 89)
- ✿ Foreign deities (1 Sam 5:7; Judges 11:24; 1 Ki. 11:33)
- ✿ Demons (Deut. 32:17).
- ✿ Inanimate idols (Neh. 9:18)
- ✿ Single (not plural) human figures (Ex. 7:1; 1 Sam. 28:13, Ps. 45:6).

*Yahweh* is an *elohim*, but no other *elohim* is *Yahweh*. Israel believed their God to be among the gods, but not among equals. He was unique, the Highest or greatest God (as signified in the term *el shaddai*). What is the point of calling one great if not compared to others? It would be pointless to compare Him to non-existent entities. When speaking of “monotheism”, it refers to the fact that God is alone in His greatness and uniqueness, there are none like Him among the “gods”. There are some phrases in the Hebrew Scriptures that seem to indicate a denial of other deities (e.g. Deut. 4:35, 39; 32:12, 39). The problem with this interpretation is that these “proof” texts are found in the larger contexts that affirm the existence of other “gods” (e.g. Deut. 4:19-20; 32:8-9, 17). The questions which must be asked: “are there blatant contradictions in a small portion of text” or “is there something else at work here”? Even the passages of Isaiah which may be regarded by some as “denials” can be understood to express the incomparability of *Yahweh* in His majesty to other deities/*elohim*, rather than a claim of non-existence (Isaiah 43:10-12).<sup>4</sup> The Deut.-Isaiah language should not be seen as a denial of the existence of other gods, but rather of *Yahweh*’s uniqueness and “other” qualities. The divine council does not threaten the position of “*Yahweh your God...the God of gods and the*

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<sup>3</sup> Ex. 25:9, Act 7:44, Heb. 8:5

<sup>4</sup> In Isaiah 47 (8-10) it is said by Babylon, “*I am, and there is no one besides me.*” We are not to think this statement represents the opinion of Babylon that she is “the only” city, but rather a unique and special city, set apart from all others because of her magnificence.

*Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God...*” Deut. 10:17. Quite the opposite, it magnifies His greatness and emphasizes His unique attributes, as Daniel said to the pagan king, “*your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules*” Dan. 4:26.

## **Titles of Council members**

These members of the Divine court have various titles by which they are known: angles (messengers), spirits, ministers, stars, princes, spirits, holy ones, mighty ones, host, servants and elders. Their relationship to *Yahweh*, the “Lord of Hosts” or of “armies” affects their roles and subsequent titles.

## **Roles of Council members**

This is not an exhaustive list but meant to show examples of many distinct roles.

- ✿ Praise/Worship – Deut. 32:43; Isa. 6:3; Ps. 103:19-22, 148:1-6; Job 38:7; Neh. 9:6
- ✿ Shepherds/overseers/rulers – Gen. 48:15-16; Deut. 32:8; Dan. 10:21; 12:1).
- ✿ Participants of a great army/host – Jos. 5:14-15; 2 Ki. 6:17);
- ✿ Carriers of God/God’s Throne/chariot – Ps. 18:10; 99:1; Ezek. 1; 10 (cf. ApM. 22:3, 33:2)
- ✿ Witnesses or judges and escorts in the court – Isa. 1:2; Ps. 82:1-4; Zech. 3:3-5, Dan. 7:13
- ✿ Vision Interpreters – Zech. 1:9, 19, 21; Dan. 7:15-17; 8:15-19
- ✿ Ministers – Isa. 6: 6-7; Ps. 103:21
- ✿ Protectors – Jud. 13:8; 2 Ki. 6:17; Ps 91:11).
- ✿ Deliverer of council decisions – Hag. 1:13, Is. 6:9, Mal. 2:7, cf. 3:1

It is *Yahweh* who controls the aspects of activity, although there is choice given among the members. There are those permitted to volunteer or render specific service (1 Ki. 22:20-23, Isa. 6:8)

## **“Host of Heaven”**

This phrase can and does refer to both the celestial bodies and the realm of spirit beings in the heavens (e.g. Is. 24:21). Every Israelite knew that *Yahweh* was the only pre-existent deity-*elohim* who was the creator/originator of all things (e.g. Is. 48:18, Jer. 50:44; cf. Acts 4:24) including “heaven’s host”.<sup>5</sup> Ps. 33:6; 148:1-5; cf. Deut; 4:19-20; 32:8-9, 43; 17:3; 29:25; 32:17; Neh. 9:6; Job 38:7-8; 1 Ki. 17:16; 21:3; 22; 23:4-5 Is. 14:13; Jer 19:13; Dan. 4:35, 8:10, Zeph. 1:5. Lord of hosts indicates various things, but most predominately communicates His position as the head of the Divine assembly. “There are 284 occurrences of the name; of these, no fewer than 251 (i.e. 88 percent) are in the prophetic books...Isaiah 1-39 (56 times), [Jeremiah (82)], Haggai (14 times), Zechariah (53 times), and Malachi (24 times). These prophets have one notable feature in common: they represent a tradition closely associated with the Jerusalem temple.”<sup>6</sup>

## **“Let Us”**

There is a great deception among many Christians because of past and present interpreters regarding Hebrew Scripture’s plural references to *Yahweh*. It is evident from the Hebrew Scriptures that in the Ancient Near East, Kings and monarchical governing entities played a prominent role in the narratives. What does that mean and did that affect the communication and metaphor God used to communicate about himself? In answer to this question, ancient and present Jewish exegetes (as well as most of today’s scholarship) have a

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<sup>5</sup> God was explicit in forbidding the worship of the Host of Heaven (this speaks of angelic and other beings in the Hebraic cosmological thought, not necessarily of literal celestial bodies of light and gas) Deut. 4:19; 17:3; Judges 13:16; 2 Ki.17:16; 21, Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:4-5; Acts 7:42. Some claim that Jesus pre-existed as The Angel of *Yahweh*. If this is indeed true, how can the fact of worshipping one of the Host instead of *Yahweh* be escaped (Rev 22:8-9)?

<sup>6</sup> Mettinger, Trygve, In *Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names*, Fortress, 1988, pg. 125

unanimous opinion: “the Creator is speaking to a divine court or assembly.” This opinion is unfortunately all but unknown within the Christian communities and therefore interpreted by them as being early substantiations for plurality within the Triune Godhead.<sup>7</sup>

There are differing thoughts on this matter, but the field can be narrowed into at least five categories:

1. God the Father speaking to the other members of the Trinity (pre-incarnate son, spirit or possibly both).

There are a “plethora” of problems in this interpretation. For any who hold to a “scripture alone” (*sola scriptura*) standard, it cannot be done. A triune formula cannot be extracted from these texts without disastrously imposing upon them something not inherent within them (eisegetical *huztpah*).

2. God is speaking to himself. Declaring to himself what is to be done (e.g. “lets do so on and so forth” being equivalent to “Here is what I’ve decided to do”).
3. The plural depicts the belief of the era in which it is communicated. The polytheistic Ancient world of Mesopotamia and other eastern cultures found its way into Israelite theology of describing God. In this case, God is speaking to a “pantheon” of other deities or gods. This is not completely unlike option (5).
4. Because the (4) plural instances match the plural term *elohim* (god(s)), it may be this denotes a plural of majesty. There are many examples throughout the ages of monarchs that have used this, even in the modern age, being cited in contemporary literature. Also called the royal we, *pluralis majestatis*, majestic plural, plural of rank, intensive plural, communicative plural or the consultative we, it communicates a plurality of might and majesty of the throne from whence it comes. This is used as a title of grandeur such as the 19th century English Queen Victoria declaring, “we the Queen of England”, “we are not amused” (rather than “I” in both instances). Also in instances such as the time a letter was written to King Artaxerxes (and no one else - **Ezra 4:11**). Yet the King speaks as though it was written to others as well. **Ezra 4:18** “*The letter you sent us has now been translated for me.*” Again, this also fits with option (5), rather than countering it. “Some scholars, e.g., Keil, Dillmann, and Driver, have suggested that this is an example of a plural of majesty; cf. the English royal ‘we.’ It refers to ‘the fullness of attributes and powers conceived as united within the God-head’ (Driver, 14). Joüon’s observation (114e) that ‘we’ as a plural of majesty is not used with verbs has led to the rejection of this interpretation.”<sup>8</sup>
5. God is speaking to members of His Heavenly entourage, court, council, assembly.  
This has the most evidence and support from the scripture by reference and example. It is also by far the most understood in relationship to the culture. This is also the opinion of the majority of Jewish scholarship both ancient and contemporary.

My opinion from a detailed investigation into this subject falls under that of opinion five. “From Philo onward, Jewish commentators have generally held that the plural is used because God is addressing his heavenly court, i.e., the angels (cf. Isa 6:8)...The choice then appears to lie between interpretations ‘us’ = God and angels or plural of self-exhortation. Both are compatible with Hebrew monotheism.”<sup>9</sup> “The extraordinary use of the first person plural evokes the image of a heavenly court in which God is surrounded by His angelic

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<sup>7</sup> Examples include *The Epistle of Barnabas* 6:12; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, LXII, “Let us”; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4:20:1; Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, XII, Book V, *Elucidations*, Ch. VIII; Origen, Origen, *Against Celsus*, Book V, Ch. XXXVII; Novatian, *A Treatise of Novatian Concerning the Trinity*, Ch. XXVI; *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, Book V., Sec. I, Ch. VII

<sup>8</sup> Wenham, G. J. (2002). *Vol. 1: Word Biblical Commentary : Genesis 1-15*, Dallas: Word, Incorporated, pg. 28.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

host.<sup>10</sup> Such a celestial scene is depicted in several biblical passages. This is the Israelite version of the polytheistic assemblies of the pantheon – monotheized and depaganized. “In both Ugaritic and biblical literature, the use of the first person plural is characteristic of address in the divine council. The familiar ‘we’...has long been recognized as the plural address used by *Yahweh* in his council.”<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that this plural form of divine address is employed in Genesis on two other occasions, both involving the fate of humanity: in 3:22, in connection with the expulsion from Eden; and in 11:7, in reference to the dispersal of the human race after the building of the Tower of Babel.”<sup>12</sup>

The Targums often times give interesting insight into these matters. The Pseudo Jonathan (Yonasan) Targum (PJE) renders the plural texts in the following way:

**Gen. 1:26** “*the Lord said to the angels who ministered before Him, who had been created in the second day of the creation of the world, Let us make man [adam] in Our image, in Our likeness*”.

**Gen. 3:22** “*And the Lord God said to the angels who ministered before Him, Behold, Adam is sole on the earth, as I am sole in the heavens above; and it will be that they will arise from him who will know to discern between good and evil.*”

**Gen. 11:7** “*And the Lord said to the seventy angels which stand before Him, Come, we will descend and will there commingle their language, that a man shall not understand the speech of his neighbour.*”

This council is not imaginary or fabrication, but an actual reality through which the God of Heaven communicated a truth to the prophets. Isaiah 41 (21-29):

*“Present your case, ’ the LORD says.*

*‘Bring forward your strong arguments, ’ The King of Jacob says.*

*‘Let them bring forth and declare to **us** what is going to take place...*

*That **we** may consider them and know their outcome.*

*Or announce to **us** what is coming...*

*That **we** may know that you are gods [elohim]...*

*that **we** may anxiously look about **us** and fear together...*

*when I look, there is no one, And there is no counselor among them Who, if I ask, can give an answer.*

*Behold, all of them are false;*

*Their works are worthless, Their molten images are wind and emptiness.”*

God here has summoned other “gods” to stand before Him and give account of themselves in a satirical taunt. The beings surrounding the throne of God are *elohim*, powerful gods who are feared by mankind. These beings are holy, but are nothing when compared to the Holy One of Israel and are not to be worshipped as such or in place of (Deut 4:19; 2 Ki. 17:16; 21:3; Zeph. 1:5, Act 7:42).

The council scenes have many purposes. One of the most notable results of the Council of *Yahweh* is that it demolishes the idea of dualism where God has an opposite or equal nemesis. *Yahweh* has no equal and alone has the final say over the affairs of the universe. There are other “powers”, but only because they were “set-up” by *Yahweh*.

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<sup>10</sup> Sarna fn. “For the celestial court, cf. 1 Ki. 22:19-22; Isa. 6:8; Ps. 29:1-2; 82; 89:6-7; Job 1:6; 2:1. In Job 38:7, divine beings are present at creation. The present interpretation is found in Gen. R 8:3; Rashi”, Sarna, Nahum M. (1989) *The JPS Torah Commentary, Genesis*, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia pg. 353

<sup>11</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 187 n. 176.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 12

## Scriptural Evidence Describing the Council

### Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament)

*“Who has stood in the council [sod] of the LORD, That he should see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened?”* Jer. 23:18.

There are controversial passages that could be examined (such as Deut. 32:7-8) but for the sake of brevity, the focus will be on less disputed passages.<sup>13</sup> There are references made to the council in every division of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). Its imagery spans from the creation of the world (Gen 1:26, Job 38:1-7) to the ushering in of God’s eschatological Kingdom (Dan. 7:9-14, Rev 19).

In the Hebrew Scriptures there are references made in many places with council language and knowledge of such and direct “council” or “throne-room” visions/visitations. There are six particular passages that are classified as “throne visions”. These visions use a verb for seeing (Heb. *raah*)<sup>14</sup> and have the image of God enthroned in one manner or another along with heavenly beings in close proximity.

#### Ex. 24:9-11

In this scene the Almighty is in the only “ratification ceremony” recorded, and some of the most extraordinary speech in all the visions. There is no other place where God is spoken of as “seen” in such a direct way. In an interesting and seeming contradictory twist the opposite is stated not long after this took place: *“You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live”* (Ex. 33:20; cf. Jud. 6:22; 13:22).<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 24 and 25 have some eschatological themes that appear to at least have roots in the theme of this vision. The prophecy speaks of a future time where *“the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth. They will be gathered together Like prisoners in the dungeon, And will be confined in prison; And after many days they will be punished... For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And His glory will be before His elders.”*

This is an interesting passage because of its prophetic nuances. *“The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain... He will swallow up death for all time.”*<sup>16</sup> In both instances the “elders” of Israel (or God) are in His presence and uses “seeing Him” synonymously with seeing “His glory”. Thus this feast, festival or banquet is a celebration of the triumph of *Yahweh* as a conquering King over His foes. Throughout the book of Exodus God is portrayed as a “man of war”<sup>17</sup> (Ex. 15:3). Warrior attributes are given in His presence on Sinai in fire, smoke and storm. What is telling is that in tradition *Yahweh* was not alone but accompanied by angelic hosts with Him, even though the Ex. 24 account speaks nothing about other

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<sup>13</sup> There are Textual critics of the Hebrew Scriptures who are unanimously of the opinion that the Qumran content (4Q45j) is superior to the MT in this particular text (בני האלהים). This is also backed by the Septuagint (LXX) rendering as well. See: Tigay, *Deuteronomy, The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 514-518; P. W. Skehan, “A Fragment of the ‘Song of Moses’ (Deut 32) from Qumran” *BASOR* 136 (1954) 12-15; Christensen, Duane L. vol. 6B, *Word Biblical Commentary: Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), pg. 796

<sup>14</sup> Daniel 7 is in Aramaic, thus using *chazah* instead of the Heb. *raah*.

<sup>15</sup> Verse 10 *“they saw the God of Israel”* – this is a place where the LXX diverges from the MT: *“they saw the place where the God of Israel stood”* and verse 11 *“they appeared in the place of God”* rather than *“they saw God”*. The Targums (Pseudo-Jonathan, Onqelos) render in favor of the LXX, *“saw the glory of the God of Israel”* and *“saw the Glory [of the Shekinah – PJE] of the Lord”*.

<sup>16</sup> Paul in 1 Cor. 15:25-26 ties this passage to Ps. 110:1. Also 2 Tim 1:10 (in the prophetic perfect) and Revelation 20:14 also carry the same theme of death being destroyed after a period of time (cf. 4 Es. 7:33).

<sup>17</sup> This of course is not literal but rather an anthropomorphic sense.

beings present: “*God’s chariots are myriads upon myriads, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them as in Sinai in holiness*” Ps. 68:17. A similar description of the event is found in Deut. 33:2, “*The LORD came from Sinai, and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran. With him were myriads of holy ones; at his right, a host of his own.*”<sup>18</sup>

### **1 Kings 22:19-23 (2 Chron. 18:18-22)**

The background to this scene is to give explanation as to the origin of the false prophecy that was presented to the king by the 400 prophets. The verification comes in verse 28, “*if you return in peace the LORD has not spoken by me.*” This confirmed Micaiah as a true mouthpiece for *Yahweh* against 400 who claimed to speak in His name. Micaiah did not speak in generic form, but addressed the King as having had direct communication from *Yahweh*, the covenant God of Israel who Ahab was rejecting. It is also this vision that was a reassertion of the Kingship of *Yahweh* at the end of the reign of one of the worst Kings in Israel’s history. *Yahweh*, not Baal and his followers or Ahab and his regime was ultimately in control. The God of Israel alone maintains the power over the affairs of men.

In this vision the prophet sees/saw (v. 19)<sup>19</sup> “*the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the Host of Heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left.*” This is one of the few places in the Hebrew Scriptures where an angelic or heavenly being other than God Himself<sup>20</sup> is referenced with the word *ruach* (spirit). This spirit is present in the planning and development of the affairs of Israel in this particular instance and volunteers service. Not service only, but advice as how to bring about the “existing” plan of *Yahweh*. He already has decreed that Ahab will fall, how that comes about remains to be seen:

- ✿ Ultimate goal of council - *Yahweh* asks of the myriads standing all around Him, “*Who will entice Ahab, so that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?*” There is no deliberation, advice or refutation as to the goal of the council. Rather there is obedience and response to accomplishment of the task at hand.
- ✿ Deliberation – “*one said one thing, and another said another*”<sup>21</sup>
- ✿ Possible solution – out of the myriads someone has a plan, steps up and comes into audience with the King, “*a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will entice him.'*”
- ✿ The King asks to hear the specifics of this ones plan – “*How?*”
- ✿ Suggestion – “*I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.*”
- ✿ Acceptance – the King sees the plan as fitting and condones it for success – “*You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do it.*” Micaiah then translates it in the following manner, “*So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these **your** prophets; the LORD has decreed disaster for you*” v. 23. A distinction is made between the one who speaks Ahab’s will and the one who speaks *Yahweh*’s will. It is *Yahweh*’s not Ahab’s will that is done.

This vision communicates several elements. The first is that in certain cases, the ruler perishes while the people do not. It also shows the origin of true prophecy, those who speak in the name of *Yahweh*, deliver the message as it originated in the halls of His council. Third, it brings out the “nothingness” of Baal and *his* desires when up against the will of the Mighty God of Israel. This is a practical application that should be applied to modern day. The Word/Plan/Declaration/Degree of the Almighty always prevails.

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<sup>18</sup> The LXX reads “on his right hand were his angels” as well as Targum PJE “ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels” while OKE reads “with Him were ten thousand saints”.

<sup>19</sup> Another example of the Hebrew verb *raah* (to see) introducing what the prophet is about to describe.

<sup>20</sup> God both is and has *ruach* – spirit.

<sup>21</sup> Implied in the context is how the NIRV translates “*One angel suggested one thing. Another suggested something else*”

## Is. 6:1-8

The people of Judah<sup>22</sup> had turned from following their God. Much of what is being said in Isaiah 1-12 deals with this issue. We are given some insight in verses 11-12 as to the reasoning behind Isaiah's pronouncements. "How long", the prophet asked. His prophesying must continue "*Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is utterly desolate, until the LORD sends everyone far away, and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.*"

This vision can be divided into two parts:

- 1) The council imagery itself, location as the Temple, *Yahweh* and His descriptions, the creatures present and their roles to *Yahweh* with their exaltation, as well as their descriptions.
- 2) The response of the prophet, his purification and authoritative commissioning to his people.

This vision of *Yahweh* on His throne comes at a time when there is much political upheaval and uncertainty with the clouds of war on the horizon. The part that is emphasized is not merely that the prophet "saw" the LORD, (*raah* - which it does say), but rather that he "*saw the Lord sitting on a throne*". This is not about Isaiah; this is about the grandeur of God as King, so much so that His hem filled the entire place. The description as to the enormity of His spender is not unlike Ps. 24:7-10, "*Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, And lift them up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.*"

Another element that needs to be mentioned is the fact that in the Ancient East, gods were territorial. When a nation was defeated, it was because superior gods from another nation or territory (cf. Dan.10:12-21) fought for them.<sup>23</sup> The God of Israel is not like this, but instead is represented and present throughout all the earth (cf. 1 Ki. 20:23, 28).

Another unique feature of this vision is it alone designates The LORD as King. Judah felt secure of themselves as long as their God, the King of Glory was sitting in His habitation, upon His throne ready to protect them at their greatest need, and rightly they should. But they had drifted from Him and His commands to them. While He is indeed loyal to His people, His loyalty firstly is with His Name or reputation. He was not some pagan god, and they had forgotten what it meant for a holy God to dwell among them. He was in fact about to wage war on them.

Around the throne of God are two six-winged creatures called seraphim ("burning ones").<sup>24</sup> These are not guardians or protectors of God, rather they protect themselves from His glory. The Seraphs<sup>25</sup> more than likely are iconic to many ancient religious figures. Although some scholarship may perceive these creatures as literary fabrications stolen from the familiar pagan images of the nations, it could be contested that it is actually the other way around. The beings/creatures present around and bearing the throne support<sup>26</sup> the fact that foreign deities and pagan monarchs actually are in service and subservience to *Yahweh*. To deny this would be a denial of the preeminence of the scriptures themselves.

Isaiah views this spectacle and declares himself unclean. One of these creatures takes the "tongs" (a utensil of Temple worship) and grabs a "burning coal" and "atones" (*kaphar*) for him. Like 1 Kings, God asks the council for a volunteer, "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?*" The scene takes place in the same courtroom as has been shown. Imagine the "*Thousands upon thousands...and myriads upon myriads*" (Ps. 68,

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<sup>22</sup> At times the southern nation of Judah is referred to as "Jerusalem" because it is the capitol.

<sup>23</sup> Hence people fearing the "God" of Israel because of His position as warrior "fighting" for Israel.

<sup>24</sup> These creatures are closer to the proximity of God's throne than any other creatures described in the scriptures.

<sup>25</sup> This exact same imagery, even down to the "*kedushah*" which they sing is found in Rev. 4:8 (cf. ApM. 37:3).

<sup>26</sup> Cherubim are first mentioned in Gen 3:24 and are found in the holy places in company with *Yahweh*. They form the throne (Ex. 25:18-22; Ps. 80:1; 99:1, 1 Sam. 4:4) and carried the celestial chariot (2 Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10)

Dan. 7) in attendance. In this vision it is not a *spirit*, but a “son of man” who steps forward as a volunteer saying “*beneni*” (I am here).<sup>27</sup> God then accepts his offer and gives direction. Through this vision, Isaiah is not necessarily established as a prophet, but His message to His people is authenticated.<sup>28</sup>

### **Ezek. 1; 10**

In these chapters recounting the visions of Ezekiel, details are included that others do not contain, while also lacking events others do not. There are a few summarizations that can be made: there are more details about the creatures, throne and glorious appearance, but also somewhat of a distancing from Him at the same time. He is more veiled, and the divine name is used far less frequently. His throne is also shown as a type of chariot, communicating once again the “warrior” aspect of His sovereignty. There are many subtle ties to the Torah, showing some of the curious “instructions” of God which serve as shadows and types of God’s own reality.

The second vision in chapter 10 was later, around six years before the fall of Jerusalem. This vision depicts the city’s doom and God’s departure from the temple. Ezekiel literally sees the Glory and the throne/chariot of the LORD leave from the Jerusalem Temple. Just like Isaiah’s prophecies, Israel’s covenant God was declaring war on them for their failure to obey.<sup>29</sup>

### **Dan. 7:9-14.**

Many of the elements in Daniel are similar to what is found in the Pseudepigraphal *1 Enoch*<sup>30</sup>, which is one of the oldest documents that exists outside of the Hebrew Scriptures, dated to around 250 BCE.<sup>31</sup>

- ✿ Daniel starts out by seeing four great beasts come out from the “sea” (vv.1-8).
- ✿ Verses 9-10 give a detailed description of his vision into the council/throne-room/temple of the Almighty.<sup>32</sup>
- ✿ In this instance the council comes into session and the Judge takes His position resulting from the action of one of the beasts/creatures, ultimately ending in the complete destruction or annihilation of the creature due to the death penalty apparently being passed. The rest of the creatures involved lives were spared, but were stripped of their power (vv. 1-12).
- ✿ One beast destroyed and others stripped of power naturally left a void in the world-domination. It is then that Daniel sees the Ancient of Days turn the authority of ruling to someone who looks human rather than beastly.<sup>33</sup> The vision portrays this “mortal” coming before a great audience. He does not just waltz in, rather he is “escorted” in. He came before the throne of the Ancient of Days and was

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<sup>27</sup> In the Zech. 3 vision there is also human participation which begins with “seeing” *raab*.

<sup>28</sup> At this point it appears that he had already been prophesying, e.g. “in the days of Uzziah” before his death.

<sup>29</sup> The prophet Amos speaks to this, even mentioning the “God of Hosts” as being the initiator of it: 3:13-15; 4:13; 5:18-20; 8:2-3; cf. also Deut 28. Jesus in the same fashion spoke about the destruction of Jerusalem, as did Paul in reference to God not sparing the “natural branches” (Rom. 11:21-24).

<sup>30</sup> Black, Matthew, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A New English Edition*, see notation on pg. 151

<sup>31</sup> Stone, Michael, *Scriptures, Sects and visions*, pg. 31,33

<sup>32</sup> The vision described in 1 Enoch 14 contains the same imagery: “the Great Glory was sitting upon it [lofty throne vv. 18-19], as for his gown, which was shining more brightly than the sun, it was whiter than any snow” (1EN 14:20). *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume One: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, James H. Charlesworth, Hendrickson, Third Edition, 2013 pg. 20. Also see Psalm 18 and the descriptions of “temple, smoke, devouring fire, glowing coals, under his feet, cherub, hailstones, clouds, thundered, lightnings” as all being relevant images.

<sup>33</sup> *Bar enash* - son of mortal man. Some suggest this may be the angel Michael. Part of the trouble with this is that in the book of Daniel, divine beings are classified as *bar elahin*- sons of God (e.g. Dan. 3:25; 6:12). The Aramaic *enash* (Dan. 2:10; 3:10) communicates the mortality of man in the same way *enosh* in Hebrew does.

presented. We are not told what or how he was presented. It must have been pretty impressive because immediately after that presentation he is handed the keys to a kingdom and given complete authority and dominion over it. Unlike the others who were stripped of power and allowed to remain for a little time, this mortal has a kingdom that is established permanently and will not be overthrown or destroyed.

✿ At Daniel's distress, he inquires as to what just happened (vv. 15-28).

My primary interest in this particular vision is the identity of the "son of man". There have been many hypotheses put forth on this subject including (but not limited to): the high priest, Michael (the angel), Israel (as a whole people, i.e. "Jacob"), a "glorified Israel" and the messianic son of David. The view of the "son of man" as a Davidic Messiah is the most common view in the early Jewish and Christian communities.<sup>34</sup> The vision centers on the role of the "son of man" and not his identity. Given the nature of the book of Daniel, it may be possible to establish several connections based on the understanding of Davidic Theology.<sup>35</sup> In another sense (Gen. 1:26-28) the roles being examined are those originally given to Adam by God at creation. It is he who had authority over everything.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel both spoke of "David" as once again sitting on the throne with dominion (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23-24; 3.7:24-25). Whoever this one is, it's evident that like those before him, he is subordinate to the Ancient One, the Most High. Many of the prophecies concerning David's house are left unfulfilled at the time of the vision of Daniel. So it would have left an ineradicable impression upon the hearers of God's unwavering promise to the lineage of David and the promise of a renewed Kingdom in the manner of Adam's unique role as King of all the earth. Like those before (including Adam) the Kingdom is handed over in a manner of stewardship, it is not by nature inherently their own.<sup>36</sup>

Because of the nature of *bar enash* (son of man), and his described role and responsibility of world preeminence it cannot be overlooked that it ties to the nature of the eschatological Davidic Prince. There are a few notable features of this council session. One is the central theme of the Kingdom of God.<sup>37</sup> Another is the inclusion of the "*saints of the Most High*" who also are participants in receiving "*sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven*" (v. 27). The council is spoken of as though (at the time of this session) it will go into session at another point in time and the decision would be that "*the saints of the Highest One*" would have possession of the Kingdom (v. 22, 26), and the creature/beast will be found guilty and destroyed (as a mortal – Ps. 82, Ezek. 28:12-15, 19). One of the primary messages portrayed in this vision is the fact that it is God who presides over the "divine assembly" and makes "judgment" over the *elohim*<sup>38</sup> of this world. When they do not rule with the divine standards (righteousness, judiciousness, mercy) they are deposed in God's time after fulfilling His divine purpose.<sup>39</sup>

It is entirely plausible that the vision of Daniel 7 is intentionally promoting a future hope for the people of God in and through this "son of man" and communicating it as the decision of the Council of God. Though

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<sup>34</sup> San. 98A, B, Commentary on Daniel, St. Jerome.

<sup>35</sup> David as God's son (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7, 12; 89:26-27); Like an angel (1 Sam 29:9; Zech. 12:8); David as ruler of the earth (Is. 11:10; Ps. 2:8; 72:8) his rule is everlasting (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 72:17, Ezek 37:25) David's heir and his house (Jer.23:5-6; 30:8; 33:15-22, 26; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:25, Hos. 3:5; Amos 9:11; Zech. 12:7-12; 13:1).

<sup>36</sup> There can however, at the same time be "inheritance" language because of something that is predestined to take place, or was foretold and expected; e.g. a son with first-born status "inheriting" the estate from his father. It was not by nature his own, but in the father's determination as to the proper suitor.

<sup>37</sup> The whole book of Daniel is quite consumed with the reign of God through human vice-regents 2:21; 4:17, 25-26, 32; 5:21

<sup>38</sup> This includes both mortals and supernatural beings.

<sup>39</sup> God's intentions for the Kingdoms can be seen when using Dan. 7 as a commentary on chapter 2. Both chapters share imagery pertaining to the "kingdom" that God will set-up, and what he intends to be the fate of all others.

the people of God (saints) do suffer and endure brutalities, and may be powerless in many situations at the hand of great foes, failing to be represented by a righteous king on the earth or a share in the kingdoms of this world, the council has decided in favor of the saints and they will not be disappointed. In the vision, it is not by the strength or militant might of the people that bring this Kingdom, but rather the mandate of the Most High.<sup>40</sup> In a manner of speaking (from the standpoint of the council), the beastly kingdoms are as good as finished because it has already been decided. They still have yet to finish their course, but their doom is secure. “Daniel’s radical stance calls into question all human endeavors of ‘bringing in the kingdom’ or of ‘humanizing the structures of society.’ Rather, this biblical witness challenges the faithful to be awake and ready for the unexpected intervention of God in wrapping up all of human history. The stories of Daniel and his friends picture men who bear eloquent testimony in both word and deed to an unswerving hope in God’s rule. As a consequence, they were made free to hang loosely on the world because they knew their hope rested elsewhere.”<sup>41</sup>

### Zech. 3:1-5

This is the last of the canonical council visions of the Hebrew Scriptures and features the interaction of the prophet, Joshua (the high priest), the angel of *Yahweh*, the Satan (accuser) and *Yahweh* himself.

- ✿ Verse one - use of “standing before” (cf. Zech 6:5) is language drawing attention to the participation in the ongoing council.
- ✿ Verse 2 – “The Satan”<sup>42</sup> is rebuked for some unknown reason, and God makes the declaration that Jerusalem and her priesthood have again been chosen or restored from exile. It is important to remember for the picture that the high priest comes before God on behalf of the people and their iniquity (Ex. 28:38).
- ✿ Verse 4 - someone from the council orders those “*standing before him*” to “remove the filthy garments from him” which is a seemingly equivalent act of the removal of iniquity and being clothed in festal robes (cf. TLevi 8:1-10).
- ✿ Verse 5 - The prophet speaks up and makes reference to clean head wrap of the priesthood (Ex. 28:37) “*Let them put a clean turban on his head.*”<sup>43</sup>
- ✿ Verse 8 Another voice told Joshua “*you and your friends who are sitting in front of you-- indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.*”
- ✿ Zech. 4 – this scene extends into the next chapter because of verse 9 making reference to “this house”. It appears to be a picture of the Messiah, the branch. There are different spectacles given to the prophet, but in verse 11 of chapter 6, the same council session (who was a symbol for the branch) is shown. Direction is given to the prophet to “*Take silver and gold, make an ornate crown and set it on the head of Joshua... the high priest*”. As a symbol this works into vv. 12-13 “*a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD... it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne... He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.*”

<sup>40</sup> In Dan. 2, the “stone cut without human hands” crushes the image (representative of the kingdoms) while in Dan. 7, the “son of man” plays no mentioned role in the defeat of the adversary.

<sup>41</sup> Childs, Brevard S., *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2011 pg. 622

<sup>42</sup> Some have suggested that this case of the Hebraic title indicates an office or title not necessarily a specific being. “The Satan” of this council scenario is found in other passages such as Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; 1 Chron. 21:1. It is in Job where this character is mentioned in a similar role of “accuser” as found in Zech. 3 (cf. Rev. 12:10).

<sup>43</sup> Even though this is not the same word used for “turban” as it is in Ex. 28 it most likely is reference to the same thing since in both cases it is reference to the high priest.

The end of chapter 6 ends with a declaration of authorization concerning the visions of the council: “*Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And it will take place if you completely obey the LORD your God*” (v. 15).

### **Council Visions Summary:**

Each one of these visions while unique in their own ways share several elements:

- ✿ The existence of a throne, whether mountain (Ex. 24), Temple (Isa. 6) or chariot and wings of *cherubim* (Ezek. 1).
- ✿ *Yahweh*, God of Israel upon the throne displaying His magnificent Kingship (“*For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts*” Isa. 6:5).
- ✿ Confirmation.
  1. Confirmation of a choice representative or anointed for a specific task (e.g. kingship, prophetic office). It is he who has heard the “word or “plan” of God within this council who can deliver it as “Hear the word of the LORD” (1 Ki. 22:19).
  2. Confirmation of God’s ongoing rule. During turbulent times or times of national upheaval *Yahweh*’s Kingship would reaffirmed (e.g. after 400+ years in the foreign land of Egypt and the birth of Israel as a nation, upon the death of a king (Isaiah 6) or when the King was about to be destroyed (1 Ki. 22), when new leadership was coming about (Zech. 3)
- ✿ All of the visions of God’s throne-room include reference to some sort of creature or heavenly being (with the exception of Ex. 24). There are generic *malakh* – messengers (angels, of which humans are sometimes called e.g. Hag. 1:13, Mal. 2:7, c.f. 3:1). There are *seraphim* (Is. 6), *cherubim* (Ezek. 1, 10), *ha-satan* (Job 1:6, Zech 3:1) and large numbers of unknown audiences, “*Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads*” (Dan. 7).
- ✿ The accompaniment of noises, voices, trumpets, lightening, thunder, smoke, fire, etc.
- ✿ Exhibition of the fact that events in the world of mortals have a reality and deliberation in the habitation of God and His Council before they manifest themselves among men.

### **Enthronement**

These passages specifically emphasize *Yahweh* as being enthroned in heaven (Dan. 6:26).

Psalms 9, 11, 24, 29, 45, 47, 68, 89, 93, 97, 96-99, 103;<sup>44</sup> Isaiah 66; Lam. 5; Ezek. 1, 10, 43; Zech. 6

### **Earthly King’s throne as an extension of God’s rule**

The King of Israel (and other Kings as well e.g. Dan. 6:27) is seen as an extension, agent or anointed of God to sit on His throne and rule. 1 Chron. 28:5; 29:23 Job 36:7; Psalm 132:11-12.

### **Location**

In ancient times, mountains were seen as the habitation of the gods, the place where the heaven and the earth met and declarations from the divine were issued. This is precisely why pagan worship is many times ascribed as “high places”. These same descriptions come into play in the Hebrew Scriptures pertaining to the God of Israel and His council. Sinai or Zion was the place where *Yahweh* was envisioned as dwelling, and often are spoken <sup>45</sup> In Ezekiel 28, a connection is made to “*Eden, the garden of God*” (v. 13) and “*the holy mountain of*

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<sup>44</sup> These Psalms are repeated in Revelation – Rev. 4:2 = Ps. 47:8; Rev. 4:10 = Ps. 47:9; Rev. 19:6 = Ps. 93:1, 97:1, 99:1; Rev. 5:9, 14:3 = Ps. 96:1, 98:1; Rev. 19:1 = Ps. 96:13, 98:9.

<sup>45</sup> There are more references, but here are a few - Deut. 33:2; Ps. 48:1-2; 68:17

God” (v. 14). There is also a reference in Ezek. 28 to the “*seat of gods in the heart of the seas*” (v. 2). Other passages suggest a connection to “watery regions” as well.<sup>46</sup> Genesis 1 describes the “*Spirit hovering over the water*” and Genesis 2:6-15 describes the waters of Eden’s garden. Many times even at a “river” the prophets of God are contacted (cf. Ezek. 1:1; Dan. 10:4; 12). Jesus is being baptized in the Jordan when the God calls from heaven (Matt. 3:16-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22).

At Sinai, seventy elders plus Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu feasted on the mountain in the presence of *Yahweh*. “*They saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank*” Ex. 24:9-11. The tent of meeting and tabernacle were seen as a “portable” Sinai in various respects.<sup>47</sup> Subtle ties in the text make the connection between the Garden of God and His throne. This is the view also seen in Jewish tradition, “*And the throne of God was fixed where the Tree of Life was*” (ApM. 22:4). With this said, the habitation being communicated is not a geographical location, but rather a matter of what might be called “dimensions”, a place not accessible to mortals without God bringing them there (i.e. in visions, etc.).

### **Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7**

These two courtroom scenes set the stage for the entire book of Job. In both passages “*the sons of God*”<sup>48</sup> and *haSatan* (the adversary) come “*before God*” on an “*appointed day*”. That the Satan enters at the same time and same place along with others to “*present themselves*”<sup>49</sup> (1:6, 2:1) suggests an affiliation with this council. He is being called upon to give an account of his ministry in the service of God. Like any other creature, angel or being, he is completely bound to the dictates of the One upon the throne, whom he ultimately serves. Nothing he does escapes the “eyes of the King” that are all over the earth. Job is being brought up in this meeting, but the ultimate story is of Job’s benefit. His entire fate was in the hands of this merciful Judge the entire time.

### **Psalm 82, 89**

“*God [elohim] has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods [elohim] he holds judgment*” (82:1)

“*The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones...  
... Who among the sons of the mighty [sons of God – *benei elim*] is like the LORD?*”

“*A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him?*” (89:5-7).

The Psalms Targum (PST) renders it in this manner:

“*God is mighty in the mysteries of the holy ones; sitting on the throne of glory, great and fearsome over all the angels who stand around him.*” (89:8).

### **Psalm 110:1**

“*The LORD [Yahweh] said to my lord, ‘Sit at My right hand while I make your enemies your footstool.’*” Ps. 110:1  
This particular passage is somewhat of a smoking gun. It is the most frequently used OT passage in the NT.<sup>50</sup> It is very important because the writers of the NT use this passage in what they considered to be a description

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<sup>46</sup> Ps. 104:3; Is. 33:20-24, Ezek. 47:1-12, Dan. 7:10, Zech 14:8, Joel 3:18, Rev. 22:1-2

<sup>47</sup> There are other parallels as well with Zion, tabernacle as His tent (Heb. - *ohel*) Is. 33:20; Ps. 26:8; 74:7; 1 Chron. 9:23.

<sup>48</sup> Reference to “sons of God” elsewhere in Job (38:7) gives indication as to their supernatural status, as humans were not present when God “*laid the foundation of the world*”.

<sup>49</sup> This Hebrew word *yatsab* is used in multiple court settings (Ex. 8:20[heb. 16]; 9:13; Josh 24:1; Prov. 22:29. Paul uses similar speech when writing to Timothy (1 Tim. 2:15).

<sup>50</sup> There are both direct quotes and allusions made to this passage - Matt 22:43-44; 26:64; Acts 2:33; 36; 7:55-56; Eph

of the Messiah. Because this passage is by nature a description of “throne imagery”, it makes several points automatically. First, there is more than one throne (which is elsewhere able to be established). Secondly, the “second” in command in this Psalm is not equal to *Yahweh* (which is consistent with the descriptions everywhere else), but rather His subordinate lord.<sup>51</sup> That a “son of David” would rule as the “right-hand” of God was a well-known thought among biblically literate Hebrews. Even so, when identifying himself with the Dan. 7 “son of man” and the Ps. 110:1 second lord at his trial,<sup>52</sup> he was denounced as having blasphemed (although there was none according to the scriptures). He had not made himself equal with *Yahweh*, the God of Israel, for in both passages (and every other council passage) everyone including the “son of man” and “second lord” does not share His throne.

### Isaiah 1:2

The book of Isaiah opens with a declarative statement pertaining to *Yahweh* speaking: “*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken*”. Basically in modern vernacular, “everyone stop and listen, the King has issued an edict.” When a council session would gather, it commences with an address to the assembly.<sup>53</sup>

### Isaiah 3:13-14

In this passage a strong case of *Yahweh* as Judge in a courtroom scenario is presented:

“*The LORD rises to argue his case; he stands to judge the peoples. The LORD enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people.*” There are instances where *Yahweh* is standing due to an investigative inquiry (cf. Amos 7:7; 9:1). Solomon had officers “standing” in his court (1 Ki. 4:5, 7, 27; 5:16; 9:23). The word translated “deputies”, “officers”, “superintendants”, “governors” or “commissaries” is *natsab* meaning “to stand” or “take ones stand”. In the same manner, members of *Yahweh*’s council also “stand” in His presence (1 Ki. 22:19; Is. 6:2; Ezek. 1:25; 10:2-3; Zech. 3:1, 4, Dan. 7:10).

### Isaiah 40:1-8

This passage communicates numerous second person plural imperatives, suggesting multiple “voices” in a council session, with the prophet himself included:

- ✿ “*Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her*” v. 2
- ✿ “*A voice is calling*” v. 3
- ✿ “*A voice says*” and another answers “*What shall I call out?*” v. 6<sup>54</sup>

## Second Temple Era Jewish Literature

The intention here is not to go into great detail in any of the extra-biblical sources, nor can an exhaustive study be shown but rather the same imagery’s manifestation at work in the same way. Philo speaks of Moses and his special relationship to God and describes the habitation of God where Moses viewed: “*Has he [Moses] not also enjoyed an even greater communion with the Father and Creator of the universe...For he also was called*

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1:20, 22; Heb 10:12-13; 1 Pet 3:22.

<sup>51</sup> This image is very akin to the narrative regarding Joseph and Pharaoh.

<sup>52</sup> Matt. 26:63-66. It is also possible that Jesus’ answer may have been influenced by Ps. 80:17 (18) “*Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.*”

<sup>53</sup> In Ex. 20 when God spoke the ten “words” to the congregation of Israel, He began the address with the declarative statement “*I am the LORD your God*”. Following these words, the familiar phenomena of lightning flashes, thunder, smoke and trumpet blasts accompanied.

<sup>54</sup> The MT reads “and he said” while the LXX and 1QIs<sup>a</sup> “and I said” indicating the prophet’s first person singular reference to himself as part of the communication (NAB, NIB, NIV, NJB, NLT, ESV, CJB).

*the god [θεὸς]<sup>55</sup> and king of the whole nation, and he is said to have entered into the darkness where God was; that is to say, into the invisible, and shapeless, and incorporeal world, the essence, which is the model of all existing things, where he beheld things invisible to mortal nature<sup>56</sup> (cf. 2 Ba. 59:3-9).*

## **Pseudepigrapha**

### **Enoch**

In this apocalyptic work, Enoch has many visions of the “throne-room” where God renders judgment (1 En. 14, 18, 25). The book lists many roles and names of ministering spirits (e.g. 1 En. 20) that the Hebrew Scriptures do not (e.g. Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Rufael, Asuryal, etc.). Like other throne visions, Enoch seems to garner authentication from his entry into the council of the “Head of Days”.

Primarily found in chapters 37-71 are visions of the “son of man”, the “elect one” beside God called “the Lord of the spirits” (correlating with “Lord of Hosts”) and “Head of Days” (relating to Ancient of Days - Dan. 7) as His co-regent (there is also direct reference to the messiah or anointed in 48:10): “*Mine Elect One shall sit on the throne of glory*” (45:4); “*Lord of Spirits hath chosen him [son of man] he [son of man] shall raise up the kings and the mighty from their seats...shall put down the kings from their thrones and kingdoms*” (46:1-8); 47:3; 48:1-10, 49:2, “*in those days the Elect One shall arise...And the Elect One shall in those days sit on My throne, And his mouth shall pour forth all the secrets of wisdom and counsel: For the Lord of Spirits hath given (them) to him and hath glorified him*” (52:1, 3); 56:4; 60:1-4; 61:8, 10; 62:2-3, 5-7, 9, 14; 63:11, 69:26-27, 29; 71:13-14, 17; 84:2-3, 2 En. 20:1; 22. Perhaps one of the primary differences found is that the Hebrew Scriptures tend to focus on the theological aspect of what is being communicated by the council rather than the physical attributes themselves that Enoch and other Pseudepigraphal works relate.

**2 Baruch** “*Thou that rulest with great thought the hosts that stand before Thee: also the countless holy beings, which Thou didst make from the beginning, of flame and fire, which stand around Thy throne Thou rulest with indignation.*” (21:6); 51:11, “*For with Thy counsel Thou dost govern all the creatures which Thy right hand has created, And Thou hast established every fountain of light beside Thee, And the treasures of wisdom beneath Thy throne hast Thou prepared*” (54:13); 59:3-9.

**4 Esdras** “*O Lord that dwellest eternally, whose are the highest heavens, whose chambers are in the air, Whose throne is beyond imagination, whose glory inconceivable; before whom (heaven's) hosts stand trembling, and at thy word change to wind and fire*” 8:20-21.

**4 Maccabees** “*The tyrant himself and his whole council admired their endurance, whereby they now do both stand beside the throne of God...*” 17:17-18.

**Testament of Levi** “*...in the heaven...are thrones and dominions, in which always they offer praise to God. When, therefore, the Lord looketh upon us, all of us are shaken; yea, the heavens, and the earth, and the abysses are shaken at the presence of His majesty. But the sons of men, having no perception of these things, sin and provoke the Most High*” (3:8-10)<sup>57</sup> “*...the angel opened to me the gates of heaven, and I saw the holy temple, and upon a throne of glory the Most High*” (5:1).

**Adam and Eve** “*I saw a chariot like the wind and its wheels were fiery and I was caught up into the Paradise of righteousness, and I saw the Lord sitting and his face was flaming fire that could not be endured. And many thousands of angels were on the right and the left of that chariot*” (25:3) (cf. ApM. 22:3, 33:2, 37:3).

**Apocalypse of Abraham** There is imagery very akin to Daniel and Ezekiel such as “streams of Fire” (8:1), “hair like snow”, “body like sapphire” (cf. Dan.7, Ex. 24). Also an ascent to heaven where a throne/chariot is viewed (Ch. 15-19).

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<sup>55</sup> The same Greek word used here is the same which is found in the Septuagint translating the word *elohim*.

<sup>56</sup> *The works of Philo: Complete and unabridged* pg. 474, Peabody: Hendrickson. De vita Mosis 1:158

<sup>57</sup> Telling of the “levels” of the heavens see TLevi 3:1-10 (cf. 3 Ba. 11)

The Talmud contains descriptions of four Rabbis who entered paradise, the Garden of God.<sup>58</sup>

## Qumran

There is much interest in the Divine Council by the Qumran community, and so much angelology that it cannot even be referenced here. Here are a few citations from various fragments:

- ✿ 1Q22 iv - “in the congregation of the gods [and in the council of the ho]ly ones.”<sup>59</sup>
- ✿ 4Q403 - “For h[e is the God of the gods] of all the chiefs of the heights, and king of king[s] of all the eternal councils.” This fragment also speaks of the cherubim and chariot: “the chariots of his inner shrine praise together, and their cherubim and the[ir] ofanim bless wonderfully.”
- ✿ 4Q405 - “a seat like the throne of his kingship in [his glorious inner shrines...there is an uproar of exultation when they lift their wings, the [murmur]ing sound of gods. They bless the image of the throne-chariot (which is) above the vault of the cherubs,[and] they sing [the splen]dour of the shining vault (which is) beneath the seat of his glory...The spirits of living [g]ods move constantly with the glory of [the] wonderful chariots.”
- ✿ 4Q418 - “in the firmaments [... in] the council of the gods.”
- ✿ 4Q491c - “a mighty throne in the congregation of the gods above which none of the kings of the East shall sit” and “I am counted among the gods and my dwelling is in the holy congregation...[f]or among the gods is [my] posi[tion, and] my glory is with the sons of the king.”
- ✿ 4Q511 - “Save me, O God, [who keeps fav]our in truth for all his creatures, who rules with just[ice those who] exist for ever and will exist for centuries. He judges in the council of gods and men. In the heights of the heavens (is) his reproach and in all the foundations of the earth the judgments of his hand.”
- ✿ 4Q530 ii. - thrones were erected and the Great Holy One sa[t down. A hundred hun]dreds were serving him, a thousand thousands [were ...] him, [and ten thousand times ten thousand be]fore him were standing. And behold, [book]s were opened and the sentence was proclaimed.<sup>60</sup>

## New Testament

The visions the Hebrew Scriptures provided were images of the God of Israel enthroned above with angels ministering all around. With Daniel 7, a slightly different idea emerges. It is not just God and the angels, but there is a second in command, a new “royal vizier”.<sup>61</sup> The prominent place of Ps. 110:1 in the NT is

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<sup>58</sup> R. Akiva, Elisha ben Abuyah, Ben Azzi and Ben Zoma – Hag. 14b

<sup>59</sup> García Martínez, F., & Tigchelaar, E. J. C. (1997-1998). *The Dead Sea scrolls study edition*. Vol. 1 published: Leiden ; Boston.

<sup>60</sup> García Martínez, F., & Tigchelaar, E. J. C. (1997-1998). *The Dead Sea scrolls study edition*. Vol. 2 published: Leiden ; Boston. (All DSS references from same source).

<sup>61</sup> Because of the “two powers” there have been attempts at binitarian theology rather than Trinitarian (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6 – One God, the Father...and one Lord Jesus Christ” – there are some later mss. which add “one Holy Spirit”). This is not what the scriptures teach and clearly a corruption, distortion and misinterpretation as to what the “powers” signify. The “son of man” is obviously subservient and not an equal, nor is the “throne” of the Almighty challenged in any way by anyone. There are also some who hold the opinion that the rabbinic form of midrashic interpretation of Daniel 7 makes its way into the Matthean expression of “Father, Son and Spirit”. The thought is that the Ancient one = Father, Son of Man = Son, angles = spirit(s) or spirits of God (seen in Rev. 1:4 - *Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come* [a clear connection to the Hebraic *Yahweh* and the verb “to be”], and from *the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth*)” (cf. Heb. 12:22-24 – “city of the living God...myriads of angels...God, the judge of all...Jesus, the mediator of a new

informative in realizing the acknowledgement of such an “individual” and as to whom the witnesses identified him. Paul uses this imagery with Timothy (5:21) when he said, “*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles*” (cf. 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:1).<sup>62</sup> Jesus makes allusions to Dan. 7 by making statements such as: “*He [God] gave Him [son of man] authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man*” (Jn. 5:27) and “*You [Father] gave Him [Son] authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him*” (Jn. 17:2). The NT portrays Jesus as the victor over the cosmic forces of evil (e.g. John 12:31; 16:11; 1 John 3:8). There are brief mentions of messengers who come from the presence of God as well (e.g. “*I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.*”

## **Yahweh and His lord.**

Is there another power in heaven? As briefly discussed, there is frequent reference to the post-resurrected Messiah, Jesus as being at “God’s right hand”.<sup>63</sup>

✿ Acts 7:55 - Stephen describes the Divine Council with Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Having gone into the great assembly and been made “lord” of all.<sup>64</sup>

There are “powers” referenced throughout the entirety of the NT.<sup>65</sup> There are passages that also use Psalm 110 to reference Jesus’ work in the mediatorial sense and in the office of High Priest.<sup>66</sup>

## **Hebrews 1**

This chapter makes multiple references to “council” Psalms: vs. 3 (Ps. 110), vs. 5 (Ps. 2), vs. 4 (a reversal of Ps. 8),<sup>67</sup> vs. 6-7 (Ps. 104), vs. 8-9 (Ps. 45), v. 13 (Ps. 110), vs. 14 (Ps. 103). The writer of Hebrews is also who brings in the Melchizedek connection to Jesus. “The view that the executor of the last judgment would be the biblical Melchizedek was based upon Psalm 110. ‘The Lord says to my lord, ‘sit at My right hand...you are a priest forever *after the order of Melchizedek.*’” The Hebrew phrase ‘after the order of’ could be understood to mean ‘I (God) have said to you (Melchizedek).’ In this sense God is addressing Melchizedek himself in the Psalm. Thus it was understood by the Essene author. According to the usual interpretation, he who will sit at God’s right hand is not Melchizedek himself, but merely one who is the same kind of person as Melchizedek. That is how Jesus understood this Psalm.”<sup>68</sup>

## **Revelation**

This book alone could be the subject of an entire study with its relationship to the Hebrew Scriptures. For the purpose of this study, only an overview is to be examined. The writer sees visions of extraordinary magnitude; God sits upon His throne holding a scroll surrounded by twenty-four other elder-thrones. An angel asks for

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covenant...”). Not a Trinitarian declaration, merely an expression of the “rearranged powers” in Heaven. Also see the Enochian references to “Lord of the Spirits”.

<sup>62</sup> This is also reminiscent of Jesus’ own words “*everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God*” Lk. 12:8 (cf. Rev. 3:5).

<sup>63</sup> Matt. 22:41-45; Lk. 20:69; Acts 2:34-36; 1 Cor. 15:23-28; Eph. 1:20-22

<sup>64</sup> Acts 5:30-31; 10:36; 17:30-31; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:5; 12:22-24; 1 Pe. 3:22

<sup>65</sup> Mk. 13:24; Lk. 21:25; Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24, 27 (cf. Ps. 8:6); Eph. 1:20-22; 3:8-10, 15; 6:12; Col. 1:15-16; 2:8-13, 15, 18; 1 Pe. 3:22; 2 Pe. 2:10; Jude 8; Rev. 3:1

<sup>66</sup> Rom. 8:33-34; Heb. 1:3-5.

<sup>67</sup> The writer here makes a subtle comparison of Messiah to Adam. Adam had rule and domination over all creation, but it is never said that Adam was “lord” over the “Heavenly Host”. In this sense, Messiah has been given a position originally not even given the first Adam, hence, he is not “*a little lower than the angels*” but “*much better than the angels*”.

<sup>68</sup> Flusser, David, *The Sage From Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus’ Genius*, 2007 Eerdmans, pg. 113

volunteers to break the seals on the scroll. There was none in the entire council or cosmos able to accomplish this task. Attention is then brought to the “lamb”, who is praised by the host of angels and elders as able to de-seal the document (authority is equated with his worthiness for the appointed task). This setting and the actions that ensue are connected to the ancient Mesopotamian tradition also visible in the Hebrew Scriptures. The ultimate purpose is to fill-in details of future events while clearly and effectively communicating that there is a new “lord” or “power” in heaven who has done and can do what no other under God can/could. Even though Revelation does not directly reference Psalm 110, pertaining to the glory of God and His worship as the King and Lord of the council, the Psalms are extensively referenced (Psalms is the Hebraic book of praise and worship – much like a hymnal would be to a modern Christian).<sup>69</sup> The book of Revelation starts out the same way throne visions all do, seeing, “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him [Jesus Christ] to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw...write in a book what you see*” vv. 1-2, 11. Keep in mind that the overall context of this book is stated in 1:10, “*the day of the Lord*”.<sup>70</sup> The book is a vision of John into God’s dwelling and unfolding events as they were relayed to him. It also contains a cumulative telling of events and descriptions from the other council visions. In the tradition of past visions, it comes at a time when the Kingship of God and the lordship of Messiah were being challenged (perhaps persecution). There is also a validation quality being expressed for not only John, but Jesus as lord as well. Throughout the entire vision John interacts, speaks, questions and carries out certain tasks (e.g. eating the book). The themes are consistent with that found in the councils: 1) God’s mountain (21:10), 2) River in Eden (21:1) (also the mention of the Edenic Euphrates – and its angelic guardians, 9:14), 3) the battle and subsequent defeat of chaos with ensuing shalom (20:2), 4) bringing the nations under subjection through conquest (19:15), 5) the visitation of nations to Jerusalem or Zion (21:24).

The thrones and powers and their reorientation are communicated and viewed in this way: “*And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them,*<sup>71</sup> I heard saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever’” (5:13).

The designation of “Almighty” is common for God throughout this book. It appears to be a Greek equivalent of “LORD of Hosts” (e.g. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22, also in 1 Cor. 6:8).

At the outset of the book familiar scenes are present:<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Compare – Rev. 11:15 = Ps. 2:2; Rev. 11:18 = Ps. 2:1; Rev. 12:5, 19:15 = Ps. 2:8, 9; Rev. 14:1 = Ps. 2:6; Rev. 14:7 = Ps. 2:10-11.

<sup>70</sup> Stern, David, JNTC pg. 791 1992 “*On the day of the Lord* if this is what the Greek *en tē kuriakē èmera* means as I believe it does, John is reporting the unique experience of having seen God’s final Judgment. If it means ‘on the Lord’s Day,’ that is Sunday, the day on which Jesus was resurrected (Mt 28:1, Mk 16:2, Lk 24:1) – and this is the majority understanding – then John is mentioning a relatively minor detail, the day of the week on which his visions took place. I think my translation is supported by the context, since the whole book of Revelation is about the Last Judgment, which over and over in the Tanakh is called ‘Yom –YHVH’ (the Day of Adonai,’ ‘the Day of the Lord’). On the other hand, Ignatius who claimed to be a disciple of the emissary John, wrote letters only two decades or so after Revelation was written, in which he uses ‘kuriakè’ to mean Sunday – as does modern Greek...This only shows how quickly the Jewish roots of the NT were forgotten or ignored...”

<sup>71</sup> Too often this is taken this as the literal creation of **the** heavens and **the** earth. This is not what is being said: “*in Heaven and on the earth.*” Jesus said this, Matt. 28:18, Paul wrote it numerous times – cf. Col. 1:14-17; Eph. 1:9-10,

<sup>72</sup> Throughout the entire book, temple scenes are present (e.g. lamp stands, elders/priests, alters, ark, incense, censor, bowls/basins, trumpets, sea, holy of holies, lamb, blood, creatures of worship).

(1:7) - quotation from Daniel 7 placing this context in that one. (1:10-11) – sounds of trumpets and voices, (1:13) - “son of man” is present (3:21) – there are other thrones – “*He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne*” (cf. Matt. 19:28; 20:23; Mk. 10:40; Lk. 22:30), (4:1) - he enters the doors of heaven “*in the spirit*” and summoned to “*come up here*”<sup>73</sup> (4:2) - He sees a spectacle that not many have seen, “*a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.*”<sup>74</sup> (cf. 7:10 – “*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb*”), (4:3) - he also sees twenty-four thrones and elders sitting (also chapters 5, 7, 11, 14, 19).<sup>75</sup> (5:10) - after the lamb was worthy to break the seals it is said of people, “*You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.*” (7:9 -17) - A multitude appears before the throne and the lamb, elders, creatures “*in the temple*”. (8) - the court is silent for a period and then trumpets are blown sounding out events. (10:3) - seven “thunders” spoke and John is not permitted to communicate what was “uttered” (cf. En. 59:2; 60:15; 3 Ba. 14:1; Rev. 6:1).<sup>76</sup> (10:11) – like other visions (specifically Ezek. 3:1-14) he has a task of speaking (for which he is being authenticated). (11:12) – the eschatological witnesses will be given the same summons for the temple court as was John (cf. 4:1), (11:15-19) – a further and more detailed revelation of what Daniel saw in his. The Ark is once again mentioned and is accompanied with lightning, thunder, earthquake and hail.<sup>77</sup> (12) – a war broke out, the adversary, who was well known to this place lost, along with his conspirators and their seats of power are taken from them. Unlike Dan. 7 (with the images of creatures) specific titles are added as a voice boomed out, “*Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down*” (v. 10).<sup>78</sup> (13)<sup>79</sup> – much of the same language is found as in council decisions: “*There was given to him*”, “*authority to act for forty-two months was given to him*”(v. 5), “*authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him*” (v. 7), “*exercises all the authority*” (v. 12), “*because of the signs which it was given him*” (v. 14), “*it was given to him*” (v. 15). (14) – an angel proclaiming timing of God’s “judgment” has finally arrived. (v. 7) “*I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man.*” (v. 14) An angel comes out of the temple proclaiming the decision of the court (v. 15), that it was time (cf. Matt. 24:36, Acts 1:7). (vv. 16-20) Multiple angels come out from the “temple” with the direction of God’s council and go into action (cf. 9:14-16). (15:5-8) Here is imagery of plagues originating from the sanctuary and the priestly ministers carrying it out. (16:1) More voices coming from the temple carrying out the orders of God (even the alter is animated and speaks v. 7). (16:17-21) - A declaration of finality, “*it is done*” (cf. 21:6), (16:18) - more lightning, thunder, earthquake, hail, (17:8) “book of Life” possibly one of the documents accessible to the court (cf. Dan. 7:10, Rev. 20:12), (17:17) - God’s purpose being done through the kings of the earth.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Acts 8:39, Rev 17:8 1 Ki. 18:12; 2 Ki. 2:11; 2:16 Ezek. 3:14; 8:3.

<sup>74</sup> The description of appearance is similar to that described by Ex. 24 and Ezek 1, 10.

<sup>75</sup> The number of elders and “white garments” are a bit of a clue as to the identity of these elders. The priests were often classified as Elders, rulers or shepherds of the people. The priest wore garments like those described (meticulously articulated in the Torah) and there were twenty-four rotations of the priesthood (1 Chron. 24:7-18). These elders are not angels and not creatures (7:11), and certainly not departed soul/spirits of those in the Christian doctrine of “heaven”.

<sup>76</sup> This was also the case for Paul who was given a vision or experience into the Paradise/Eden/temple/council/ heaven (2 Cor. 12:1-4).

<sup>77</sup> This imagery is a reenactment of Sinai. One startling detail is the viewing of the ark. In Temple prose, the Ark is ever seen on one day only, Yom Kippur. The reason for this detail being included should not be overlooked; it is a major piece of evidence regarding timing.

<sup>78</sup> This is possibly a scene in which Ps. 82 has some significance: *Elohim* (gods) who have lost their positions of authority and will die like mortal man at the bidding of the council. In the same way Adam had mortality was thrown out of the “Eden/temple/court/habitation” of God because of refusal to adhere to divine instruction.

<sup>79</sup> Verse 6 makes a connection between “*those who dwell in heaven*” and “*His tabernacle*”.

(18:8, 10, 20) - God as judge and pronouncement of such. (19:11-16) – A white horse is seen and the “armies[hosts] of Heaven” follow his lead. (20:4-6) – Judgment given to others on thrones...reigning with Christ for a thousand years. (20:11-15) - A great judgment in the council before the throne where more books were opened, (21:3, cf. 1 En. 47:3) – there are multiple references in this chapter to Sinai, the tabernacle and a perfected Jerusalem. (21:16) - a voice declares that God will “tabernacle” among men, the temple is measured and found to be a cube, “*length and width and height are equal*”. This communicates a great deal because it is only the second cube found in the entire scriptures.<sup>80</sup> The rest of the temple is absent, but only the inner sanctuary, the most holy place, which is a representation of God’s habitation, Eden/paradise. Thus directing the reader/hearer to Genesis where God dwells with perfect man in shalom, the picture of His throne in the Holy Paradise of God.

## Conclusion

- ✿ There is no question as to the “place” of other gods in relationship to *Yahweh*, God of Heaven and earth. There are many powers, gods and lords, but there is only One *Yahweh*. His “throne” is not in jeopardy of being supplanted. As King, Warrior and Judge, none who oppose Him can “stand”.
- ✿ The plural pronouns used of God are able to be substantiated with evidence of great proportions. To see the “plurals” as Trinitarian formulae is willfully ignorant, cuts against the grain of tradition that predates any Christian writings in existence and also counters that upon which scholars almost unanimously agree, very few are holding onto the “new” argument. God is speaking to His Divine entourage and assembly members and does so continuously, not just in the so called “Genesis Plurals”.
- ✿ The NT writers clearly saw Jesus as the eschatological “son of man” who is the vice-regent of God in the roles of warrior and judge through whom God would initiate the renovation and restructuring of the cosmos. This ideology is built upon the tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures as told by the prophets. This imagery of the council is a continuation of that known to them for millennia. What appears more clearly in the NT is the “Host of Heaven” also includes resurrected saints participating in the conquest of the council’s desire. What is also important to note is that the NT does not shift focus from God as the Almighty in favor of an “exalted Christology”. In other words, Jesus is not a usurper of Divine status or glory but rather an inheritor of an office prepared for him from before the inception of the world which has glorification in its own right (Ps. 97:7; Jn. 17:5, 24; Heb. 1). Nor are the writers of the NT confused as to the identity of the Messiah in relation to God the Father, the Almighty who sits on the Throne in the council of His Holy Ones. Subordination to God is clearly seen and established from Genesis to Revelation.

The council imagery was a primary device for communicating the glory of God, His superiority over the Host (other gods who the nations worshipped disobediently) and for reaffirming His rule and role in the Hebrew Scriptures at specific times as King over the entire universe. It was then used to communicate the role of Messiah as God’s eschatological agent of salvation and redemption who attained a position of authority and exaltation.

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<sup>80</sup> The first cube is the Most Holy place (inner sanctuary), which is the chamber where the “throne of God” in the Tabernacle (15’x 15’x 15’) and Temple (Solomon’s 30’x 30’x 30’) is symbolized.