

89 AN INQUIRY INTO HEISER'S UNSEEN REALM

Introduction: Michael Heiser's popular book, "The Unseen Realm", conveys his version of the fallen angel narrative. In it, he uses the following scriptures to support his thesis. We have condensed his assertions, to the best of our ability, in bold capital letters in the title of each section. We are not attempting a robust critique, but to raise possible alternative interpretations and spark discussion. This paper may not be of interest to those who have not read the Michael Heiser material. These passages are in the order in which they appear in the Bible.

1. GENESIS 3:1 THE SERPENT IN THE GARDEN WAS A SPIRITUAL BEING.

Scripture: *"The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Yahweh God had made."* Gen 3:1

Comment: If the serpent was a divine being, it would not be referred to as a "beast of the field" in the Bible.

See PRETERIST PAPER #59 "Serpent in the Garden was not Satan"

2. GENESIS 6:1-4 THE SONS OF GOD WERE FALLEN ANGELS WHO TOOK HUMAN WIVES AND HAD GIANT OFFSPRING (NEPHILIM).

Scripture: *"When men began to multiply on the surface of the earth, and daughters were born to them, God's sons saw that men's daughters were beautiful, and they took any that they wanted for themselves as wives. Yahweh said, 'My Spirit will not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; so his days will be one hundred twenty years.' The Nephilim were in the earth in those days, and also after that, when God's sons came in to men's daughters and had children with them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown."* Gen 6:1-4

Comment #1: From verse 1 to 8, there are 5 references regarding the wickedness of men. It was the sins of men, not the sins of angels, that moved Yahweh to cause the flood.

Comment #2: This passage does not say the giant Nephilim were born to the human women. It simply states that while the referenced marriages were taking place, the giant Nephilim were prominent occupants in the land. It's important to refrain from reading unwarranted assumptions into the text.

Comment #3: Heiser maintains that "sons of God" only pertains to celestial beings in the Tanakh. However, "Sons of God" pertains to certain human beings as well celestial beings.

Scriptures:

A. *"[Israel is my son [1121], my firstborn, and I said to you, 'Let my son [1121] go...'"* Ex 4:22-23

B. *"You [Israel] are sons [1121] of the Lord your God."* Deut. 14:1

C. *"Sons [1121] of God presented themselves before the Lord."* Job 1:6 and 2:1.

D. *"...all the sons [1121] of God shouted for joy?"* Job 38:4-7

E. *"Bring my sons [1121] from far away..."* Is. 43:6-7

F. *"They are my people, sons [1121] who will not deal falsely;" so he became their Savior."* Is. 63:8

G. *"Is not Ephraim my dear son [1121], the child in whom I delight?"* Jer.31:20

H. *"...they will be called 'sons [1121] of the living God.'"* Hos 1:10

See PRETERIST PAPER #74 "The Nephilim"

3. GENESIS 12:1 AFTER BABEL, YAHWEH GAVE THE NATIONS, EXCEPT ISRAEL, TO OTHER GODS.

Scripture: *"Now Yahweh said to Abraham, 'Leave your country, and your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you.'" Gen 12:1*

Comment: "The Unseen Realm" suggests that Yahweh gave the other nations over to other gods and concentrated His attention on Israel only until the first century. However, in the Old Testament, Balaam, apparently a non-Israelite, had prophetic capabilities and guidance by Yahweh. Nebuchadnezzar, a foreign king, was given visions and discipline from Yahweh. A prophet was sent to Nineveh, an Assyrian gentile nation, and successfully turned them from wickedness to the Creator. It appears that God was always working with other nations.

4. EXODUS 20:3 "HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME", PROVES OTHER GODS ARE REAL.

Scripture: *"You shall have no other gods before me."* Ex 20:3

Comment: Heiser maintains that God would not say, "Thou shalt have no other God's before me" if other gods weren't real gods. But consider the situation of someone believing in non-existent gods. A common sense approach is to do what Paul did in Acts 17:22ff. It's doubtful Paul thought the images at the Areopagus represented real gods, but he wisely did not say they didn't exist. He simply pointed to the (greater) unknown God. Some false gods people have today are money, materials things, status, sex, etc., but most believers wouldn't try to convince people they should not have those gods, but rather, endeavor to direct seekers to the one true God. The first commandment does not prove there are other gods.

Scripture: *"We know that no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no other God but one."* I Cor 8:4

5. DEUTERONOMY 4:19-20 YAHWEH TOLD THE ISRAELITES NOT TO WORSHIP THE HEAVENLY LIGHTS. THEY WERE FOR PAGAN NATIONS TO WORSHIP.

Scripture: "... and lest you lift up your eyes to the sky, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you are drawn away and worship them, and serve them, which Yahweh your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole sky. But Yahweh has taken you, and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be to him a people of inheritance, as it is today." Dt 4:19-20

Comment: This passage is used to maintain that the sun, moon, and stars are gods for the non-Israelite nations to worship. However, that is not what this passage says. It states that Yahweh made the heavenly lights for the good of everyone, including Israel. Israel was to worship the one and only invisible God. Never does the text suggest that the heavenly lights are gods or that pagan nations should worship them.

6. DEUTERONOMY 32:8-9 THIS PASSAGE REFERS BACK TO THE TOWER OF BABEL STORY.

Scripture: "When the Most High gave to the nations* their inheritance,** when he separated the children of men, he set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For Yahweh's portion is his people. Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Dt 32:8-9

Comment: This passage is thought to be a reference to the scattering of nations in Genesis 11. However, it is not about scattering, but about the orderly delineation of boundaries and the giving of an inheritance. The Genesis 11 nations were not given boundaries or promised an inheritance. However, in Numbers 34:2, Yahweh outlined the boundaries of the promised land, giving to Israel its inheritance. It should be noted, "setting boundaries" is pretty much the opposite of "scattering".

Scripture: "Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, 'Command the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When you come into the land of Canaan—this is the land that shall fall to you for an inheritance, even the land of Canaan according to its borders...' Num 34:2f.

Scripture: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out to the place which he was to receive for an inheritance. He went out, not knowing where he went." Heb 11:8

***Note:** Israel was sometimes referred to as a plural of nations: "God said to him [Jacob], 'I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations will be from you...' Gen 35:11.

****Note:** Israel was referred to as "a people of inheritance". Dt 4:20.

7. I SAMUEL 28:13 THE WITCH OF ENDOR SAW SAMUEL COMING UP OUT OF THE GROUND.

Scripture: The woman [witch of Endor] said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth." I Sam 28:13

Comment: When the witch said, "I see a god coming up out of the earth," should we believe her? The Bible warns over and over to not consult with those who deal in occult practices. Occultists can cast strong delusions over the willing hearer, which, it could be argued, happened to Saul. In addition, it is essential that no assertions of witches influence our theology, even if she appears to make a correct prediction.

Scripture: "Don't turn to those who have familiar spirits, nor to the wizards; don't seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am Yahweh your God." Lev 19:31.

8. JOB 2:1 SATAN, A SPIRITUAL ENTITY, BROUGHT AFFLICTION ON JOB.

Scripture: "Again, on the day when God's sons came to present themselves before Yahweh, Satan came also among them to present himself before Yahweh." Job 2:1

Comment: The common noun, "ha-satan" is correctly translated "the adversary" and should not be construed to be a proper noun, Satan, as most translators render it.

Scripture: "They [Job's relatives and friends] comforted him, and consoled him concerning all the evil that Yahweh had brought on him." Job 42:11

Comment: It was Yahweh who brought tribulation on Job. Job was being refined. See PRETERIST PAPER #62 "Satan in Job"

9. PSALM 82 THIS PSALM SHOWS THERE ARE/WERE SINFUL GODS.

Scripture: "A Psalm by Asaph. God presides in the great assembly. He judges among the gods. 'How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked?'" Ps. 82:1-2 (see entire Psalm)

Comment: Heiser maintains that this passage shows God presided over an assembly of lesser gods. However, the Psalmist is using the word "gods" metaphorically to denote Israel's judges' superior power in the affairs of men. They were supposed to be ethical men who listened to their God-given conscience to judge righteously.

Scripture: "They [Israel's judges] must not discriminate in judgment, but hear the lowly and the great alike. Nor should they be intimidated by human beings, for judgment belongs to God." Dt. 1:16-17

Comment: Israel's judges of Psalm 82 were representatives of Yahweh, but were judging corruptly.

Note: Israel was sometimes referred to as a plural of nations: "God said to him [Jacob], 'I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations will be from you...' Gen 35:11.

See PRETERIST PAPER #71 "Council of Gods or Men?"

10. ISAIAH 14:1-22 THIS PASSAGE IS AN ALLUSION TO THE FALLEN ANGEL STORY.

Scripture: *"How you have fallen from heaven, shining one, son of the dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend into heaven! I will exalt my throne above the stars of God! I will sit on the mountain of assembly, in the far north! I will ascend above the heights of the clouds! I will make myself like the Most High!'"* Isaiah 14:12-14

Comment: This passage (vs 3-22) is clearly about a man, a king of Babylon, who vaunted himself up, thinking himself to be a god, either actually or figuratively. The perception that kings were gods was a common ancient belief. Even as late as the 1940s, Emperor of Japan, Hirohito, was considered to be a living god. Notice that this king of Babylon knows he is an earth-bound man, but is determined to "ascend to heaven" and be the most powerful of rulers.

See PRETERIST PAPER #69 "Lucifer was not a Fallen Angel"

11. EZEKIEL 28:1-19 THE FALLEN ANGEL STORY IS ALLUDED TO IN THIS PASSAGE.

Scripture: *"Son of man, tell the prince of Tyre, 'The Lord Yahweh says: 'Because your heart is lifted up, and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the middle of the seas;' yet you are man, and no god, though you set your heart as the heart of a god... You were the sealer of perfection, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering...'"* Eze 28:2,12-13

Comment #1: This passage (vs 1-24) states clearly, many times, that the subject is a man, not a fallen angel. "Eden" is a symbol of the king's former ease and affluence. References to the king's perfection and beauty, are also said of the city of Tyre itself, in Ezekiel 27.

Scripture: *"...the Lord Yahweh says: 'You, Tyre, have said, I am perfect in beauty.' Your borders are in the heart of the seas. Your builders have perfected your beauty."* Ezekiel 27:3-4

Comment #2: It appears Heiser was unaware that the jewels referred to the High Priest's breastplate, the fiery stones to the law of Moses, and the cherub to the Jerusalem temple. These symbols indicated Tyre's close relationship with Israel.

However, Tyre betrayed Israel. See Ezekiel 28:13-16

See PRETERIST PAPER #70 "Beautiful Fallen Angel?"

12. DANIEL 4 FALLEN ANGELS REBELLED AGAINST GOD AND LUSTED AFTER HUMAN WOMEN.

Scripture: *"I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven.... This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.... And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it...'"* Dan 4:13,17,23

Comment: There are only three references to the watchers in the Bible. They are unanimously referred to as holy ones doing God's will with no mention of lusting after human women, a narrative promoted in the fictitious Book of Enoch. When we run across writing that contradicts the word of God, it needs to be viewed skeptically.

See PRETERIST PAPERS #88 "The Book of Enoch is Fiction"

13. MATTHEW 4:8-10 JESUS WAS TEMPTED TO WORSHIP THE DEVIL.

Scripture: *"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil....9 He said to him, 'I will give you all of these things [kingdoms of the world], if you will fall down and worship me.'" Mt. 4:1,9*

Comment: Would Jesus, who had taught in the temple at age 12, saw the Spirit of God descending on him, and heard a voice out of the heavens saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased", be seriously tempted to fall down and worship the devil?

Scripture: *"For we don't have a high priest who can't be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who has been in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin."* Heb 4:15

Comment: Jesus was tempted as we are. Are we tempted by the devil coming to us tempting us to sin, or do we sin from within our own hearts?

See PRETERIST PAPER #63 "Did the Devil Tempt Jesus?"

14. SYNOPTIC GOSPELS: PALESTINE WAS FULL OF DEMONS IN THE FIRST CENTURY.

Comment: What the Old Testament called sickness, the gospel of Matthew called "possessed with demons".

Scripture #1: *"When evening came, they brought to him many possessed with demons. He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.'" Mt 8:16-17*

Scripture #2: *"Surely he has borne our sickness and carried our suffering; yet we considered him plagued, struck by God, and afflicted."* Is 53:4

Comment: Jesus was monotheistic. Believing in other gods, like demons, is polytheism. Therefore, we can logically conclude, that "casting out demons" in the synoptic gospels, was a customary expression of the day. It should be noted, the gospel of John does not mention "casting out demons" nor does the entire Old Testament.

Scripture #1: *"Hear, Israel: Yahweh is our God. Yahweh is one." Dt 6:4*

Scripture #2: *"It was shown to you... that Yahweh is God and that there is none else besides Him." Dt 4:35*

Scripture #3: *"Yahweh, He is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is none else." Dt 4:39*

Scripture #4: *"All the peoples of the earth may know that Yahweh, He is God. There is none else." 1 Ki 8:60*

Scripture #5: *"I am Yahweh, and there is none else. Besides Me, there is no God." Is 45:5*

Scripture #6: *"Jesus replied, 'This is the most important of all the commandments: Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.'" Mk 12:29*

See PRETERIST PAPER #73 "Casting Out Demons"

15. JOHN 14:30 SATAN IS/WAS THE PRINCE OF THE WORLD.

Scripture: *"The prince of the world comes, and he has nothing in me." Jn 14:30*

Comment: In order to understand who Jesus was calling the prince (ruler) of the world, we need to figure out who was "coming". Those who came to arrest Jesus included the Chief Priests.

Scripture: *"Jesus said to the Chief Priests, captains of the temple, and elders, who had come against Him, 'Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs?'" Lk 22:5*

Comment: The High Priest lived in a palace and appears to be "the prince of the [Old Covenant] world" (See Mt 26:3-4)
See PRETERIST PAPER #66 "The Ruler of this World" is not Satan"

16. EPHESIANS 6:12 PAUL IS REFERENCING WICKED SPIRITUAL BEINGS IN HEAVEN.

Scripture: *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers [#746], against the authorities [#1849], against the cosmic powers [#2888] of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Eph 6:12*

Comment #1: The words "arche" [#746] and "exousia" [#1849] refer to human rulers in the New Testament.

Kosmokratoras [#2889] occurs only once in the Bible and can be broken down into cosmic (#2889) powers (#2904). Kosmos [#2889] is often a reference to the orderly arrangement of the Old Covenant world, so it appears, kosmokratoras is a reference to temple powers, which Paul is calling "this dark world". Therefore, he is not talking about a different spiritual dimension.

Scripture: *"The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all." Ps 103:19*

Comment #2: God's kingdom is perfect and untrammelled by evil. There can be no evil entities in God's heaven. Therefore, we can conclude this reference to "heaven" was a reference to the temple, a symbol of God's presence. The temple was hopelessly corrupt in the first century.

Scripture: *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood."*

Comment #3: Most first century Jews were possessed by the corrupt temple world view. This godlessness was not dependent on any one person or persons. It was a world view that continued regardless of the person (the high priest, for example) who occupied the seat of power. Therefore, Paul's struggle was not with a specific person or persons, but with the pervasive, depraved temple world view.

See PRETERIST PAPER #67 "Are there Evil Powers in Heaven?"

17. COLOSSIANS 1:16 THRONES, DOMINIONS, RULERS, AUTHORITIES ARE REFERENCES TO SPIRITUAL HIERARCHIES.

Scripture: *"By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are upon earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones [#2362], or dominions [#2963], or rulers [#746], or authorities [#1849]..." Col 1:16*

Comment: Heiser indicates that "thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities" are referencing spiritual hierarchies—various ranks of celestial spiritual beings. This is an idea found in occult literature like Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy, but it is not Biblical. In the New Testament, "thrones" pertain to Moses, Archelaus, and Herod and the other three words refer, also, to worldly rulers. See Preterist Paper #67.

18. JUDE 5-6 FALLEN ANGELS WERE BOUND IN CHAINS AROUND THE TIME OF THE FLOOD.

Scripture: *"Now I desire to remind you, though you already know this, that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who didn't believe. Angels who didn't keep their first domain, but deserted their own dwelling place, he has kept in everlasting bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day." Jude 5-6*

Comment: Notice that Jude is referencing something that occurred after the Exodus, not around the time of the flood. Korah and company, the ministers who were not content with their God-given ministerial offices, wanted to usurp the High Priest's role. They were swallowed up by the earth (kept "under darkness") and awaited the judgment.

Comment: "Angels" (#32 angelous) means messenger and was used for people like John the Baptist, for example.

Scripture: *"This is the one [John the Baptist] about whom it is written: 'Look, I am sending my messenger [angelon #32] ahead of you who will prepare your way before you.'" Mt 11:10*

See PRETERIST PAPERS #65 "Are There Wicked Angels in Jude?" also #72 "Angels Kept in Eternal Chains"

19. REV 12:7-8 MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELS FOUGHT AGAINST SATAN AND HIS DEMONS IN HEAVEN.

Scripture: *"There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels made war on the dragon. The dragon and his angels made war. They didn't prevail. No place was found for them any more in heaven."* Rev 12:7-8

Comment: Should we suppose there can be a war in God's Kingdom of Heaven? If war can arise in God's Kingdom, heaven is not safe from an uprising at any time. Rather, the temple was the representation of heaven to the Jewish people. The temple was presided over by the corrupt priesthood who had individuals ("angels") working for them persecuting Christians. All that came to an end by AD 70.

See PRETERIST PAPER #68 "War in Heaven" – Revelation 12

20. THE FALL OF ADAM WAS ONLY PART OF MAN'S PROBLEM. THE FALLEN ANGELS (WATCHERS), AS WELL AS THE TOWER OF BABEL CONTRIBUTED TO THE FALLEN CONDITION OF MAN.

Comment: Michael Heiser endorsed the idea of the second temple literature which stated that man's downfall was due to three things: Adam's sin, the Watchers, and the tower of Babel. However, there is no indication of this view in the New Testament. Paul placed the cause of the fall squarely on Adam (Romans 5:12-19, I Cor. 15:21-22) with no mention of the Watchers or the tower of Babel narratives. In addition, why would anyone look to second temple literature for truth since Jesus and the New Testament writers agreed that Judaism begat a wicked and adulterous generation in the first century? (Mt 12:39, 16:4, 17:17, Acts 2:40, etc)

Concluding thoughts: Eisegesis is the interpretation of scripture using one's own assumptions or desires to determine the meaning. Exegesis is the explanation of a text based on objective analysis. It appears "The Unseen Realm" relies heavily on eisegesis and leads the believer into non-biblical pagan beliefs, but you be the judge.

ADDENDA: an excerpt from a talk delivered by Patricia Bailey at "The Great News Network Eschatology Conference" on 5/3/25 (P.P. #86) "THE UNSEEN REALM"

Adjacent to the character of Satan, is the fallen angel story. A version of that narrative has recently been popularized by Michael Heiser in his book, "The Unseen Realm, Recovering the Supernatural World View of the Bible." It has over 9,000 reviews on Amazon with a very impressive 5 star rating. His viewpoint has gained a sizable following among traditional Christians as well as preterist believers.

I have written on most of the key passages that Michael Heiser cites in his book. It appears his interpretations require the reader to wear "fallen angel glasses" adding unneeded layers of complication to the texts. Occam's Razor is the problem solving principle that recommends searching for explanations with the smallest possible set of elements. It emphasizes that "entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity". I believe all 16 of Heiser's key passages I have examined multiply entities beyond necessity. Please see Preterist Papers #59-#74.

The fallen angel narrative is highly dependent on the extra-Biblical "Book of Enoch", written sometime in the 400 years between the Old and New Testament. Most people have a vague notion of this story and falsely believe it's in the Bible. This book falsely claims to have been written by Enoch, an ancestor of Noah. The author appears to cash in on the moral authority and godly nature of Enoch, a mysterious character who, we're told in the Bible, did not die. The author of the book of Enoch constructed a kind of Bible-fan fiction that was apparently very popular in the first century, proving that, even in the first century, sex sells. In this story, the fallen angels, known as the Watchers, are lustful seducers of human women. However, in Daniel 4, the Watchers are faithful messengers of Yahweh who come to earth to carry out Yahweh's will—not seduce women. When extra-Biblical writings contradict the Word of God, it should invite extreme caution. But these contradictions didn't seem to bother the unsavory characters who were advocates of the book of Enoch to whom Jude and Peter referred in their writings. The fictitious book of Enoch seems to be the source of the disrespect these wicked men heaped on Yahweh's devoted celestial angels referenced in Jude and 2 Peter 2. P.P. #65 and #72. The book of Enoch may also be one of the sources of the Jewish fables Paul referenced in Titus and Timothy—(Titus 1:14-16, 1 Tim 1:4-7, 2 Tim 4:3-4).

Remarkably, Michael Heiser and those who hold his world view, claim that if you don't believe in Satan, along with a pantheon of gods, you don't have a supernatural world view. So they maintain that you can believe in God, Jesus, miracles, the inspiration of scripture and not have a supernatural world view. This is just plain illogical.

Even though Heiser rejected the idea that he was promoting polytheism, it's pretty difficult to deny. We believe that Psalm 82, where he reads into the text a council of sinful gods, is actually using the word elohim in a figurative way to indicate the authority of Israel's judges. It should be noted that the "gods" in Psalm 82, act suspiciously like corrupted powerful men. Please see P.P. #71 "Council of Gods or Council of Men?"