

SPIRITUAL BEINGS

A Sermon Series on the Unseen Realm

WEEK 3

Satan & the Powers Over the Nations

The Adversary · The Divine Council · The Territorial Rulers · The Son of God Invades

Home Study & Sermon Notes

Teaching Pastor Frank · with Pastor Sabas Jimenez

Anchor Text: Psalm 82:1 & Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

A NOTE ON SOURCES

Many of the ideas, frameworks, and theological categories in these notes are drawn from the work of **Dr. Michael S. Heiser** — especially *The Unseen Realm* (Lexham Press, 2015) and his companion volumes *Angels* and *Demons*. Ancient sources such as *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* are cited only as background to how Second Temple Jews read their Scriptures — never as Scripture itself, and never as a basis for doctrine.

Two interpretive choices are flagged in the notes so the church can see them plainly: the reading of *Deuteronomy 32:8* (“sons of God,” following the Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint), and the identification of the serpent with Satan, which develops in Second Temple Judaism and is confirmed by the New Testament. We teach this with gratitude and with open hands — any errors of application are our own. Scripture is quoted from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

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How to Use These Notes

These notes follow Sunday's teaching movement by movement, so you can review what we covered, study ahead, or walk a home group through the material with your Bible open. Where you see a *Scripture block*, look the passage up and read it in its own context — the goal is never to take our word for it, but to see it on the page yourself. The recap boxes at the close of each movement gather the main point in one place, and the discussion questions at the back are built for a table of friends, not an exam.

A word on method: we read Scripture *for* us, but it was not written directly *to* us. To hear it rightly, we first ask what it meant to its original, ancient audience — and then we hold the interpretive details humbly while holding the main point firmly. Week 3 leans on that discipline more than most, because it asks us to see the *leadership* behind the rebellions we studied in Week 2.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Weeks 1 and 2 laid the foundation: the *elohim* and the divine council, and then the three great rebellions — the serpent in Eden, the sons of God in Genesis 6, and humanity at Babel. Those weeks told us *what happened*. Week 3 asks a different question: *who is behind it* — and what God has done about it in Christ.

1. The Kingdom Behind the Curtain

Over the past two weeks we traced three rebellions against God. The **first** took place in Eden, when the serpent deceived Adam and Eve and sin and death entered God's good creation. The **second** came in Genesis 6, when the sons of God crossed a boundary God had set, multiplying wickedness on the earth. The **third** happened at Babel, when humanity united in pride to make a name for itself — and God, in response, confused the languages, scattered the nations, and (according to Deuteronomy 32) placed the nations under spiritual rulers while keeping Israel as His own inheritance.

Those events tell us *what* happened. Today we move from the events to the *leadership* behind them. So we ask a different set of questions:

- Who is Satan, and what is his role?
- What happened to the rulers God placed over the nations?
- Are there really territorial spirits?
- What does Paul mean by “principalities and powers”?

Understanding these questions is not trivia. It is how the whole story of redemption comes into focus — and how the arrival of the Son of God becomes the turning point of history rather than a footnote to it.

IN ONE SENTENCE

Behind humanity's rebellion stands a real adversary and an organized kingdom of rebellious spiritual rulers — and Jesus came to confront, defeat, and reclaim what that rebellion stole.

2. The Original Adversary — Who Is Satan?

Satan Is Not a Species

One of Heiser's central points is that "Satan" is not the name of a *type* of spiritual being. Scripture never says Satan is an angel, a cherub, a seraph, or an archangel. Instead, Satan is a supernatural being who rebelled against God. Just as "king" is not a species of human, "Satan" is not a species of spirit.

"Satan" Originally Meant an Adversary

The Hebrew word *śāṭān* means adversary, opponent, accuser, prosecutor. It describes a *role*, not originally a personal name. Scripture gives us courtroom imagery for it.

ZECHARIAH 3:1-2

"Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the LORD said to Satan, 'The LORD rebuke you, O Satan!'"

REVELATION 12:10

"...for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

The picture is consistent: Satan opposes God's people and seeks to accuse, deceive, and destroy. But while Satan accuses, Jesus intercedes.

ROMANS 8:33-34

"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died... who indeed is interceding for us."

Think of a courtroom: a defense attorney and a prosecutor are both lawyers. "Prosecutor" is a job, not a species. In the same way, "Satan" first described the one who opposes and accuses.

Was He Always Called "Satan"?

No. Genesis 3 never calls the serpent "Satan." It introduces the *nachash*. Only later did Jewish theology identify the serpent with "the Satan," and by the New

Testament that identification is explicit (Revelation 12:9; 20:2). The progression runs like this: in Genesis, the *nachash*; in Job, “the satan” — an accuser standing in God’s council; in Second Temple Judaism, the two are identified; in the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles confirm it.

JOB 1:6–7

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them...”

INTEGRITY FLAG · SECOND TEMPLE BACKGROUND

The identification of the Eden serpent with Satan is a development within Second Temple Judaism that the New Testament then confirms (Revelation 12:9; 20:2). Genesis itself introduces the *original rebel*, not the title. We hold the identification confidently — because the New Testament makes it — while being honest that Genesis does not spell it out.

Then Who Is the Nachash?

The Hebrew root behind *nachash* (נָחָשׁ) carries more than one meaning at once. It can mean a **serpent** (the normal translation). It can mean **one who practices divination** — to obtain supernatural knowledge, which fits the garden exactly, since the being is offering Eve hidden knowledge. And it is connected to the idea of a **shining or bronze one** — something polished and radiant, the way Daniel 10 later describes heavenly beings with bronze-like brilliance.

Why a serpent at all? Ancient Near Eastern thinking is different from ours. We think “snake = evil.” Ancient Israelites also associated serpents with divine beings, immortality, wisdom, supernatural power, and throne guardians. The imagery is far richer than “a reptile.” Heiser argues that the being in Eden was a supernatural throne guardian who chose to rebel. Before he was ever called “the Adversary,” he was the shining guardian of Eden who turned against God’s plan for humanity.

THE TIMELINE IN ONE GLANCE

Genesis 3: the nachash (the serpent). → **Job:** “the satan” (an accuser in God’s council) — a title, not yet a name. → **Second Temple Judaism:** the

nachash is identified with the satan. → **New Testament:** Jesus and the apostles confirm it — the serpent is the devil, is Satan.

3. The Powers Over the Nations

Satan Is Not Alone

Many Christians picture spiritual warfare as a duel between God and Satan alone. Scripture paints a far larger picture. Satan is one member of a much larger rebellion within the unseen realm. The Bible speaks of angels, cherubim, seraphim, archangels, watchers, sons of God, rulers, authorities, powers, dominions, and principalities. These are not just interchangeable words for “demons.” They describe different offices, responsibilities, and ranks. Not every evil spirit is “a demon.”

Heaven Has Government

One of the great misconceptions is imagining heaven as an unorganized place where countless angels simply hover and worship. Scripture consistently portrays heaven as a *kingdom* — with order, authority, assignments, and delegated responsibility. God is the absolute King. Beneath Him are heavenly beings who serve His purposes. Some remained loyal. Others rebelled.

PSALM 82:1

“God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment.”

Notice the scene: God is speaking, He is in His divine council, and He is judging “the gods.” This is one of the most important passages for the biblical worldview. And the “gods” here are not faithful rulers — they are *corrupt* ones.

PSALM 82:2–7

“How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?... They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness... I said, ‘You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die.’ ”

God’s accusations are pointed: these rulers judge unjustly, defend the wicked, neglect justice, and walk in darkness. Instead of governing according to God’s righteousness, they led the nations into corruption and idolatry. And yet God never loses His authority. He does not ask permission; He pronounces judgment and declares the sentence: “like men you shall die.” Every rebellious ruler will answer

to God. Crucially, these beings are members of a council God *appointed* — they are never His rivals or His equals.

The Sons of God and the Disinherited Nations

DEUTERONOMY 32:8–9

“When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the LORD’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.”

After Babel, God scattered the nations and, according to Deuteronomy 32, allotted them — assigned them — to the sons of God, while keeping Israel as His own. God did not abandon the nations; He *delegated* them. Importantly, at this point in the story there is no sign these rulers had yet gone corrupt. The passage simply says the nations were assigned. The corruption is revealed later.

INTEGRITY FLAG · TEXT-CRITICAL CHOICE

We follow the reading “according to the number of the *sons of God*,” found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Greek Septuagint. The later Masoretic Text reads “sons of Israel.” The “sons of God” reading fits the passage — nations placed under spiritual administrators while Israel is kept as God’s portion — but it is a manuscript decision, and we name it openly rather than treating it as settled beyond question.

DEUTERONOMY 32:17

“They sacrificed to demons that were not God, to gods they had never known...”

Here Moses reveals what happened next. Rather than leading the nations toward the true God, the sons of God rebelled and drew the nations into idolatry, demanding worship for themselves. The Hebrew word behind “demons” is *shedim* — one of the few places the Old Testament names demons directly. The lesson is sober: idolatry is never spiritually neutral. Behind false worship stand real rebellious beings. This is why the first commandment says, “You shall have no other *gods* before me” (Exodus 20:3) — not merely “no idols.”

SIDEBAR · THE PLAGUES AS COSMIC WARFARE

Seen through the Deuteronomy 32 worldview, the ten plagues were more than a jailbreak from slavery — they were judgment on the gods of Egypt. The Nile turned to blood (Hapi, Osiris); frogs (Heqet); darkness over the sun (Ra, and Pharaoh the “son of Ra”); the death of the firstborn (Pharaoh as a living god, Isis, Osiris). God says it Himself: *“On all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am Yahweh”* (Exodus 12:12).

Territorial Rulers — A Glimpse Behind the Curtain

DANIEL 10:12–13

“...The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me...”

DANIEL 10:20–21

“...now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come... there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.”

Daniel 10 gives one of the clearest windows into the unseen realm in all of Scripture. Three observations. **First**, the “prince of Persia” is not a human king — no human delays a messenger sent from God for twenty-one days. The Hebrew *sar* can mean a human ruler, but here the conflict is plainly supernatural, since the archangel Michael is involved. **Second**, Michael is called “one of the chief princes” — two kingdoms are in conflict, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. **Third**, the “prince of Greece” is already waiting behind the next empire. Earthly kingdoms rise and fall, but spiritual powers stand behind them.

IMPORTANT OBSERVATION

Daniel never rebukes the prince of Persia. He never addresses it, and he attempts no spiritual-warfare technique. He simply prays — and God sends His messenger. Daniel 10 is not a manual for fighting territorial spirits. Its purpose is to reveal that they *exist*, and that God is the one who moves against them.

IN ONE SENTENCE

After Babel, God assigned the nations to the sons of God as stewards; those rulers became corrupt, took worship for themselves, and led the nations into idolatry — while God kept Israel as His own and remained the supreme King over all.

4. Why the Apostle Paul Talks About Powers

EPHESIANS 6:12

“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.”

Notice that Paul never reduces our struggle to “people.” Behind human rebellion is a spiritual conflict, and Paul describes an *organized* kingdom — rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, spiritual forces of evil. Most of us, writing that verse, would simply have said, “our struggle is against demons.” Paul does not, because he has received revelation of a structured hierarchy of rebellious powers.

COLOSSIANS 1:16

“For by him all things were created... whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”

COLOSSIANS 2:15

“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”

Paul’s vocabulary comes straight from the Old Testament worldview — Deuteronomy 32, Psalm 82, Daniel 10. He sees a world occupied by rebellious spiritual powers opposed to God’s kingdom. And he says two things about them at once: Christ *created* every rank of them (they were never His equals), and Christ has already *disarmed* them and made a public spectacle of them. Paul’s “rulers and authorities” are not random spiritual terms; they are the same supernatural powers Scripture introduced long before.

IN ONE SENTENCE

Paul names an organized kingdom of rebellious powers — not one undifferentiated mass of demons — and announces that the Christ who created them has already disarmed them at the cross.

5. The Son of God Invades Enemy Territory

Everything changes when Jesus arrives announcing, “The kingdom of God has come.” The King has come to reclaim His territory. This is why demons recognize Him immediately, why exorcisms suddenly become common, why He confronts evil so directly. Every demon cast out, every healing, every miracle is a declaration: the kingdom is invading enemy ground.

LUKE 11:20

“But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

The Seventy and the Nations

Why did Jesus send exactly seventy (Luke 10)? The number is deliberate. Genesis 10 lists roughly seventy nations — from Shem, Ham, and Japheth. In sending seventy, Jesus symbolically announces that God is reclaiming the nations lost at Babel. Then He says, “I saw Satan fall like lightning” — not merely because one spirit was cast out, but because the kingdom of darkness had begun to collapse.

The Cross and Pentecost

At the cross, Jesus defeated sin, death, Satan, and the rulers, authorities, and powers (Colossians 2:15). Then, at Pentecost, something striking happens: people hear the gospel in every language.

ACTS 2 · MATTHEW 28:19

“...we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” / “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”

At Babel, language divided humanity and scattered the nations. At Pentecost, the Spirit did not erase languages — He empowered the Church to carry one gospel across every one of them. Babel scattered; Pentecost begins the gathering. The Great Commission is God reclaiming every nation He had disinherited — through the descendants of Abraham and the finished work of Christ, carried by His Church.

The Sons of God and the Son of God

Here is where every thread ties together. God once assigned the nations to the sons of God, and they rebelled. So God Himself came down — as the *Son* of God, with a capital S — to set right the chaos the sons of God had made (Psalm 82). The Jewish leaders understood exactly what Jesus was claiming.

JOHN 10:30-36

“I and the Father are one.”... “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.”... Jesus answered, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’?” (citing Psalm 82:6)

They reached for stones because they heard Him clearly: a man making Himself God. This is the heart of it — Jesus is Yahweh come in person, God the Son incarnate, not one god among many and not a rival within the council. And through Him, we are brought in.

JOHN 1:12 · ROMANS 8:14

*“But to all who did receive him... he gave the right to become children of God.”
/ “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”*

We are now children of God, sent by the power of the Holy Spirit to take the nations and the world back for the kingdom — which is exactly why the Church needs the Spirit’s power. The mission is nothing less than reclaiming the nations lost at Babel. Jesus entered enemy territory to reclaim what rebellion had stolen, and He has drawn us into that same mission.

WHERE IT ALL LANDS

We are not fighting flesh and blood. We live inside a cosmic conflict — Satan is real, the powers are real, the kingdom of darkness is real. But Jesus Christ has already begun their defeat: *“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him”* (Colossians 2:15). And of His people it is written, *“you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth”* (Revelation 5:9-10).

6. Key Terms

Nachash

The Hebrew word for the being in Eden (Genesis 3). Its root carries three ideas at once: serpent, one who divines (gives hidden knowledge), and the shining/bronze one. Points to a supernatural throne guardian, not merely an animal.

Satan / śātān

Hebrew for “adversary, accuser, prosecutor.” Originally a role or title, not a species or a personal name. Identified with the Eden serpent in Second Temple Judaism and confirmed by the New Testament.

Shedim

The Hebrew word rendered “demons” in Deuteronomy 32:17 — one of the few places the Old Testament names demons directly. The real spiritual beings behind idolatrous worship.

Divine Council

God’s heavenly assembly of spiritual beings (Psalm 82:1; Job 1). God is the supreme King; the council serves under His authority. Some members remained faithful; some rebelled.

Sons of God (bene ha-elohim)

Members of the divine council. In Deuteronomy 32:8–9 the nations are assigned to them; some later rebelled and drew the nations into idolatry (Psalm 82).

The Deuteronomy 32 Worldview

Heiser’s term for the framework in which, after Babel, God disinherited the nations and placed them under spiritual rulers, keeping Israel as His own — the backdrop for the whole biblical story of reclaiming the nations.

Territorial Spirits / Sar

Spiritual “princes” standing behind nations and empires (Daniel 10 — the princes of Persia and Greece). *Sar* means prince, ruler, or commander; context marks it as supernatural.

Principalities & Powers

Paul’s language (Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:15) for the organized ranks of rebellious spiritual authorities — created by Christ, and disarmed by Him at the cross.

7. Scripture Index

- **Genesis 3; 10; 11** — the nachash; the ~70 nations; Babel.
- **Exodus 12:12; 20:3** — judgment on Egypt's gods; the first commandment.
- **Deuteronomy 32:8-9, 17** — the nations assigned to the sons of God; the shedim.
- **Job 1:6-7** — “the satan” among the sons of God.
- **Psalms 82:1-7** — God judges the corrupt rulers of the divine council.
- **Daniel 10:12-13, 20-21** — the princes of Persia and Greece; Michael.
- **Zechariah 3:1-2** — Satan the accuser in the heavenly court.
- **Luke 10; 11:20** — the seventy; the kingdom arriving.
- **John 1:12; 10:30-36** — the Son of God; becoming children of God.
- **Acts 2** — Pentecost, the reversal of Babel.
- **Romans 8:14, 33-34** — led by the Spirit; Christ intercedes.
- **Ephesians 6:12** — the powers we wrestle.
- **Colossians 1:16; 2:15** — the powers created and disarmed by Christ.
- **Matthew 28:19; Revelation 5:9-10; 12:9-10; 20:2** — the Great Commission; the reigning kingdom; Satan identified and cast down.

8. Reflection & Discussion Questions

- Before this week, how did you picture “Satan”? Does it change anything to hear that the word first named a *role* — an accuser — rather than a species?
- Read Psalm 82 slowly. What strikes you about God judging rulers He Himself appointed? Where do you see His authority never slipping, even over rebels?
- Deuteronomy 32 says God “delegated” the nations rather than abandoning them. How does that reframe the way you think about the spiritual state of the world’s nations today?
- In Daniel 10, Daniel prays and God sends the answer — he never confronts the “prince of Persia” directly. What does that teach us about how we relate to spiritual powers?
- Idolatry, Scripture says, is never neutral. Where do you see “modern idols” that ask for a kind of worship — and what would wholehearted allegiance to Christ look like instead?
- Pentecost reverses Babel — one gospel crossing every language. How does that shape the way you think about your part in the Great Commission?
- Jesus is the Son of God who came to set right what the sons of God ruined. How does seeing that make the gospel feel bigger this week?

9. Looking Ahead to Week 4

Next week we turn from the *rulers* over the nations to the ground troops of the kingdom of darkness: **Demons & Unclean Spirits**. We'll ask what demons actually are, why the Gospels are so preoccupied with them, and what the word "unclean" really signals — and we'll see the intrinsic authority of Jesus over every one of them.

A NOTE BEFORE WE GET THERE

We'll be careful to distinguish what Scripture states plainly from what comes to us as Second Temple background — particularly around the *origin* of demons, which we'll flag clearly as tradition rather than direct biblical assertion. As always: Bible open, questions welcome, main point held firmly and the details held humbly.

"He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him." — Colossians 2:15