

UNSEEN WORLD OF THE BIBLE

Powellhurst Baptist Church

09 October 2022

Session 1: "Believing the Bible" (*Supernatural*, 11-16)

Introduction

What are some of the hardest things to believe found in the Bible?

1 Kings 22:19-23 NIV

Background. King Ahab of Israel and Ben-Hadad of Syria formed a military alliance, because king Shalmaneser III of Assyria (859–824 BCE) was making his way westward. In about the year 853 BCE, Shalmaneser would be met in southern Aram by a coalition of twelve western nations at the Battle of Qarqar.



Shalmaneser III's Kurkh Monolith names King Ahab (found in 1861).

Three years earlier, Ben-Hadad had once sent a message to Ahab, threatening: "May **the gods** [*elohim*] judge me severely if there is enough dirt left in Samaria for all my soldiers to scoop up in their hands." (20:10) Although king Ahab of Israel was introducing worship of the pagan god **Ba'al** in Israel, a prophet visited Ahab, announcing: "This is what Yahweh has said: 'Do you see this huge army? Look, I am going to hand it over to you this very day. Then you will know that I am Yahweh'" (20:13)

After his defeat, Ben-Hadad's advisers said to him: "Israel's **god** [*el*] is a **god** [*elohim*] of the mountains. That is why they were able to overpower us. But if we fight them in the plains, then we will certainly overpower them" (20:23). However, A prophet visited the king of Israel and said, "This is what Yahweh' has said: 'Because the Syrians said, "Yahweh is a god of the mountains and not a god of the valleys," I will deliver this entire huge army into to your control. Then you will know that I am Yahweh'" (20:28).

In about 853 BCE, king Jehoshaphat of Judah came to visit king Ahab, to seek his military help in taking back the city of Ramoth Gilead from the Syrians, they sought advice from several prophet, including Micah, who, at first, assured both kings that they would succeed. However, when they pressed him to tell them the complete truth, Micah replied by describing the scene recorded in 1 Kings 22:19-23.



¹⁹ Micaiah continued, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD [Yahweh] sitting on his throne with all the multitudes [šābā] of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. ²⁰ And the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?’

“One suggested this, and another that. ²¹ Finally, a spirit [rûaḥ] came forward, stood before the LORD and said, ‘I will entice him.’

²² “‘By what means?’ the LORD asked.

“‘I will go out and be a deceiving spirit [rûaḥ] in the mouths of all his prophets,’ he said.

“‘You will succeed in enticing him,’ said the LORD. ‘Go and do it.’

²³ “So now the LORD has put a deceiving spirit [rûaḥ] in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you.”

Group discussion

Form tiny groups. Take up to four minutes to read the passage aloud. Then let everyone make observations about what was happening with the ‘divine council’ in the ‘unseen realm’. Reply to these queries: How does Yahweh make use of lying spirits? How do actions taken in the unseen realm play out in the physical world? Report these to the whole class.

Jude 1:6 ESV

⁶ And the angels [angelos] who did not stay within their own position of authority [archē], but left their proper dwelling [oikētērion], he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.

In Jewish tradition, these were the ‘sons of God’ (or ‘sons of the gods’) described in Genesis 6:2, “the sons of God [bānê hā-’ēlōhîm] saw that the daughters of men were good in appearance; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.”

‘In Jewish tradition (except most of the rabbis), the “sons of God” in Genesis 6:1-4 were fallen angels who left their assigned place to have intercourse with women.’ Book of 1 Enoch 10:11-14; 18:15-

16; 21:3-6. One named 'Azazel was thrown into 'darkness' (10:4), which was applied to the realm of the dead in much ancient tradition.' The 'great day' meant the day of judgement (1 Enoch 22:11; 54:6; 84:4). From Craig S. Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (2014).

In the Apocrypha, which used to be included in Protestant editions of the Bible, Wisdom of Solomon 17:15-17 reads: 'Sudden and unexpected fear overwhelmed them. And whoever was there fell down and thus was kept shut up in a prison not made of iron; ... they were seized and endured the inescapable fate, for with one chain of darkness they all were bound.'

1 Peter 3:18-20 NIV

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. ¹⁹ After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits — ²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

Three main views: '(1) that between his death and resurrection, Jesus preached to the dead in Hades, the realm of the dead (the view of many church fathers); (2) that Christ preached through Noah to people in Noah's day (the view of many Reformers); (3) that before or ... after his resurrection, Jesus proclaimed triumph over the fallen angels (the view of most scholars today).' Keener.

'In early Christian literature, "spirits" nearly always refers to angelic spirits rather than human spirits, except when explicit statements are made to the contrary. The grammar here most naturally reads as if, in the Spirit who raised him, he preached to them after his resurrection; further, v. 22 mentions these fallen angels explicitly.' Keener

2 Kings 6:8-23 ESV

The prophet Elisha was staying at the town of Dothan, which was located about ten miles from Samaria, the capital of Israel. After the king of Syria failed at many attempts to capture the king of Israel, his servants him: "The prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom" (2 Kings 6:12). So he sent troops to Dothan to capture Elisha.

When Elisha's servant rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" (6:15).

¹⁶ "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Group discussion

Form tiny groups. Take up to four minutes to share together (a) ideas on what you have learned from the four bible texts we discussed in this session, and (b) questions that you have about these bible texts or on similar texts. Report these to the whole class. Send questions by e-mail to galen@currah.com