

PSA Examined**Article Series:**

Article # 11:
Spiritual Warfare,
Passover, &
Christus Victor



PSA Series â?? Biblical Spiritual Warfare, Passover, and the Defeat of Satan (Christus Victor?)

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Article # 11:
Spiritual Warfare,
Passover, &
Christus Victor



Welcome to the 11th article in this series on Penal

Substitutionary Atonement (PSA). You can start from the [intro article](#) if youâ??d like, which Iâ??d suggest if you havenâ??t read the series thus far, but this article *should* mostly make sense without the previous ones. I would recommend that you read at least the TL;DR (*too long; didnâ??t read*) from the previous article on what ransom/redemption are if you havenâ??t. Itâ??s about the length of this intro, so not too long, and you can go directly to that part of the article with [this link](#).

At ~34k words, this is the longest article Iâ??ve ever written by a large margin.

Iâ??ve tried to keep it as concise as possible, but thereâ??s an enormous amount of ground to cover and that takes time. If you need to take a break and come back later, you can expand the table of contents just below and jump right to the part of the article you left off at. Anyway, maybe grab a nice cup of tea (*or coffee if you prefer*) and settle in because thereâ??s a lot of ground to cover.

Here we go.

Actual Spiritual warfare 101

There are a few ways to introduce this, but starting with Daniel 10 seems like the most logical place. I recommend that you read the whole chapter, which you can do [here](#) (*link opens in a new tab*), but the summary is that Daniel saw something prophetically that disturbed him, and then he started praying for clarity. However, it was three weeks before he got an answer. When he did, it was because an angel showed up. That's enough context for the relevant verses:

Daniel 10:12-13 & 20-21

12 Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for **from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this** and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. **13** "But the **prince of the kingdom of Persia** was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, **Michael, one of the chief princes**, came to help me, for I had been left there with **the kings of Persia**.

â?!

20 Then he said, "Do you understand why I came to you? But **I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia**; so I am going forth, and behold, **the prince of Greece** is about to come. **21** "However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. **Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince.**

Notice: "the prince of Persia" and "the kings of Persia".

Now, since those two were restraining *an angel*, I think it's pretty obvious that we aren't talking about human kings or princes. That seems obvious. (*Though, if you disagree after reading the rest of this article, please leave the reasons why you disagree in the comments section.*)

Notice also "Michael, one of the chief princes" in verse 13 and "Michael your prince" in verse 21. Given the wording, this seems like an obvious reference to the Archangel Michael mentioned later in Daniel 12, and also in both Jude 1:9 and Revelation 12:7 in the New Testament.

Jude 1:9

9 But **Michael the archangel**, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Now, the word "archangel" is ἀρχαγγελος (archaggelos) and it means a ruler of angels:

743 ἀρχαγγελος (from 758 ἀρχων, "of the first order, chief" and 32 ἄγγελος, "angel") "an archangel; an angel of the highest rank" (see Dan 10:13, 12:1; see also Lk 1:19; Rev 8:2, 12:7); "a ruler of angels, a superior angel, an archangel" (Souter).

Thus, it makes perfect sense if "Michael, one of the chief princes" from Daniel is the Archangel Michael. Michael was going to help the angel in Daniel 10 fight against "the prince of Persia" and

the kings of Persia, and we also see Michael fighting demons in Revelation.

Revelation 12:7-9

7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

The dragon is Satan, and his angels (demons) were thrown down with him.

Again, this drives home that if Michael was needed to help in Daniel 10, then we aren't talking about human princes or kings. Rather, it seems clear that they are demonic princes and kings.

Now, the New Testament tells us that there is authority and hierarchy among the demons.

Luke 11:14-15

14 And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed. 15 But some of them said, He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. 16 Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven. 17 But He knew their thoughts and said to them, Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls. 18 If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. 19 And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges

This reinforces what we saw in Daniel 10, that there are seemingly at least three levels of demons. There's your common/ordinary demons, your demonic princes, and your demonic kings. There might even be more levels, but we aren't told if there are.

This idea of demonic kings is picked up elsewhere as well, specifically in Ezekiel 28. Verses 1-10 seem like they are obviously about the human ruler of Tyre, and he is called the leader of Tyre. However, in verses 11-19, we get a different figure called the king of Tyre.

As you read this, ask yourself if this is a human king, or a demonic king.

(And remember that cherub is a type of angel, though you might more easily recognize the plural form: cherubim.)

Ezekiel 28:11-19

11 Again the word of the LORD came to me saying,

12 â??Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, â??Thus says the Lord GOD,
â??You had the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

13 â??**You were in Eden, the garden of God;**
Every precious stone was your covering:
The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;
The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;
And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,
Was in you.
On the day that you were created (Notice: â??createdâ?•, not â??bornâ?•.)
They were prepared.

14 â??**You were the anointed cherub** who covers,
And I placed you *there*.
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

15 â??**You were blameless in your ways**
From the day you were created (Notice: â??createdâ?•, not â??bornâ?•.)
Until unrighteousness was found in you.

16 â??By the abundance of your trade
You were internally filled with violence,
And you sinned;
Therefore **I have cast you as profane**
From the mountain of God.
And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.

17 â??**Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;**
You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;
I put you before kings,
That they may see you.

18 â??By the multitude of your iniquities,
In the unrighteousness of your trade
You profaned your sanctuaries.
Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you;
It has consumed you,
And I have turned you to ashes on the earth
In the eyes of all who see you.

19 â??All who know you among the peoples
Are appalled at you;

You have become terrified
And you will cease to be forever.â?•â??â?•

A few things to notice:

- v12 â?? The king of Tyre has the â??seal of perfectionâ?• and is â??perfect in beautyâ?•
- v13 â?? â??You were in Eden, the garden of Godâ?•
 - Created, not born
- v14 â?? â??You were the anointed cherub, You were on the holy mountain of Godâ?•
 - â??Cherubâ?• is a type of angel
- v15 â?? Created, not born
- v16 â?? â??Therefore I have cast you [out] as profane **From the mountain of Godâ?•**
- v17 â?? According to verse 17, it seems like pride caused the fall.

So, human king or demonic king?

Verses 1-10 seem obviously about a human king, but then verses 11-19 seem to clearly be about a demonic king â?? possibly even Satan himself â?? again supporting Daniel 10.

This idea of demonic kings is alluded to in other places as well, and note the lowercase â??gâ?• in the following passage:

2 Kings 1:1-4

1 Now Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. **2** And Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber which was in Samaria, and became ill. So he sent messengers and said to them, â??Go, inquire of Baal-zebul, **the god of Ekron**, whether I will recover from this sickness.â?• **3** But **the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, â??Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them, â??Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebul, **the god of Ekron?â??** 4** â??Now therefore thus says the LORD, â??You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but you shall surely die.â??â?• Then Elijah departed.

Notice that in verse 3, God Himself says that Baal-zebul is the â??god of Ekronâ?•.

This might seem strange until we look at what the New Testament says.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, **4** in whose case **the god of this world** has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

And again:

1 John 5:18-20

18 We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. **19** We know that we are of God, and that **the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.** **20** And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

And Jesus speaking:

John 12:31-32

31 Now judgment is upon this world; now **the ruler of this world will be cast out.** **32** And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.

And Jesus again:

John 14:30-31

30 I will not speak much more with you, for **the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;** **31** but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

The ruler in question obviously isn't God because Jesus said that *he has nothing in Me*. Thus, it seems clear based on everything we've seen so far that the ruler of this world is Satan.

There's yet another passage that really drives this home.

2 Timothy 2:24-26

24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, **25** with gentleness correcting **those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,** **26** and they may come to their senses *and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*

Those who haven't repented are in *the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will*. There's yet one more passage that's a bit less clear, but it will be important to discuss it for later in the article.

Now, I would normally simply quote the next verse in the NASB. However, there's a single crucial word that I don't think the NASB got quite right. The NASB isn't wrong since the word can mean more than one thing, but I think the NASB (*and most other translations*) picked the wrong nuance of the Greek word here.

We'll look at that word right after we look at the passage, but for this quote, **I'll use the NASB with the NRSV's translation of that one word, since I think the NRSV got that one word correct.**

not quoting fully in the NRSV because honestly, it's a terrible translation. (*For the criteria that make it a terrible translation, please see [my article on Bible translations](#).*)

Anyway, here's the passage, and for transparency, the NASB translates the relevant word "elemental things", whereas it's translated "elemental spirits" in the NRSV. We'll look at the word after the quote.

Galatians 4:1-9

1 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. 3 So also **we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental spirits of the world.** 4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that **He might redeem those who were under the Law**, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 Because you are sons, **God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts**, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

8 However at that time, **when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.** 9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, **how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental spirits, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?**

With the context of everything we've seen so far, this makes perfect sense. The Greek word translated "elemental spirits" is $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\iota\alpha$ ([stoicheion](#)), and here are two lexical quotes:

4747 $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\iota\alpha$ properly, **fundamentals, like with the basic components of a philosophy, structure, etc.; (figuratively) "first principles," like the basic fundamentals of Christianity.**

[4747 ($\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\iota\alpha$) refers to "the rudiments with which mankind . . . were indoctrinated (before the time of Christ), i.e. the elements of religious training or the ceremonial precepts common alike to the worship of Jews and of Gentiles" (J. Thayer).

The RSV however renders $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\iota\alpha$ as "elemental spirits," i.e. spiritual powers or "cosmic spirits" (DNTT, 2, 828). This views 4747 / $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\iota\alpha$ ("elements") as ancient astral beings associated with the very beginning (make-up) of the earth.]

And the second:

Context:

- The Greek word $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\iota\alpha$ appears in several New Testament passages, each providing insight into its varied applications. **In Galatians 4:3, Paul uses the term to describe the "elemental spiritual forces of the world" that held people in bondage before the coming of Christ. Similarly, in Colossians 2:8 and 2:20, Paul warns against being taken captive by "elemental principles" of the world, which he**

contrasts with the fullness found in Christ.

- In Hebrews 5:12, ἡ ἀρχαία γνώσις is used to refer to the “elementary principles” of God’s word, indicating the basic teachings that believers are expected to understand before moving on to more mature doctrines.
- The term also appears in 2 Peter 3:10 and 3:12, where it is used in a more literal sense to describe the physical elements of the world that will be dissolved in the end times.

Thus, “elemental spirits” (or “elementary spirits” might even be better) is a perfectly valid translation, and it’s also mentioned by top-tier lexicons like BDAG as well. However, it’s also perfectly legitimate to translate it “elemental things” as the NASB does. (And by the way, “things” could refer to spirits!) Contextually, “spirits” makes more sense as a contrast to the mention of “Spirit of His Son” in verse 6, and also “you indeed served as slaves to the ones who by nature aren’t **gods**” in verse 8.

Now, you could also make the argument that “elemental things” makes sense if this is referring to the law, which would make sense since it is the book of Galatians. However, that doesn’t account for verse 8, which makes absolutely no sense if the law is in view.

Anyway!

The sum of all this is that Satan and his demons have effectively enslaved the whole race of mankind. (Believers have been freed, more on the mechanics of this later.)

And just to drive the point home, I’ve saved the strongest verse for last, which happens during **Jesus’s temptation by the devil**.

Luke 4:5-7

5 And he led Him up and showed Him **all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.** 6 And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all **this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.** 7 “Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.” 8 Jesus answered him, “It is written, “YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.”

Now, obviously this is Satan speaking “the father of lies according to John 8:44” so we need to be careful. That said, he was talking to Jesus Himself. Personally, I don’t think the devil is stupid enough to try to lie to God Himself and think he could get away with it. He might be, but I doubt it. I’m going to continue on that premise, and notice that it fits perfectly with everything we’ve seen so far.

All the kingdoms of the world were “handed over” to Satan.

Again, we saw above that the unbelievers were “held captive by him to do his will”, that he “the god of this world”, “the ruler of this world”, etc.

All of these verses together plus a bunch I didn't include for space's sake paint a very clear picture of the biblical reality of spiritual warfare.

The world has been enslaved by Satan.

It's extremely likely that Jesus included something about this in the Lord's prayer. You're likely very familiar with it, so I'll just quote the one line in two different translations:

Matthew 6:13

NKJV: And do not lead us into temptation, **But deliver us from the evil one.** For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

NASB 1995: And do not lead us into temptation, **but deliver us from evil.** For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

The Greek could legitimately be translated either way, and this commentary explains it well:

Deliver us from evil. The Greek may grammatically be either neuter or masculine, evil in the abstract, or the evil one as equivalent to the devil. The whole weight of the usage of New Testament language is in favour of the latter meaning. In our Lord's own teaching we have the evil one in Matthew 13:19; Matthew 13:38; John 17:15 (probably); in St. Paul's (Ephesians 6:16; 2Thessalonians 3:3), in St. John's (1John 2:13-14; 1John 3:12; 1John 5:18-19) **this is obviously the only possible interpretation.** Romans 12:9, and possibly John 17:15, are the only instances of the other.

[Source.](#)

Thus, even the Lord's prayer almost certainly contains a reference to the evil one.

Thankfully, scripture is clear that believers have been freed from this.

Colossians 1:13-14 (LSB)

13 Who rescued us from the **authority of darkness**, and transferred us to the kingdom of the **Son of His love**, **14** in whom we have **redemption**, the forgiveness of sins.

And also, while Paul was recounting his conversion on the Damascus road, he recounted the gospel that Jesus Himself commanded him to preach:

Acts 26:18

18 to open their eyes so that **they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God**, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those

who have been sanctified by faith in Me.â??

God rescued believers from the dominion/authority of Satan, but how did he get that dominion/authority in the first place?

Weâ??ll look at that next

How Satan got his authority/dominion

There are two basic views on this and they can be summarized as follows:

1. It was given to him by Adam when he fell
2. It was given to him by God

Now, itâ??s entirely possible that both are true. Iâ??m not trying to create a false dichotomy, and in fact, it seems like scripture implies that both are true. Weâ??ll look at each in turn.

It was given to him by Adam when he fell

For starters, weâ??ll look at a very familiar verse to establish that man did indeed have authority over the world.

Genesis 1:26-28

26 Then God said, â??Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and **over all the earth**, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.â?• **27** God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. **28** God blessed them; and God said to them, â??Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and **subdue it; and rule over** the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.â?•

Now, if you also look at a verse in 2 Peter, the connection becomes clearer.

2 Peter 2:17-22

17 These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. **18** For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, **19** promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for **by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved**. **20** For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. **21** For it

would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. **22** It has happened to them according to the true proverb, **“A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,”** and, **“A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.”**

The most important phrase there is: **“by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.”** Man has certainly been overcome with sin, and Jesus reinforces this point:

John 8:31-36

31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, **“If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”** **33** They answered Him, **“We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, “You will become free”?”**

34 Jesus answered them, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”**

Now, this could be understood two ways:

1. The enslavement is legitimate and almost legal, granting the thing that overcame the man authority over the man.
2. The enslavement is similar to how a drug addict is “enslaved” to his drugs, and thus his drug dealer. There’s no legal or legitimate authority, but the addict is still enslaved in a very real sense because he craves what the drug dealer sells: drugs.

I don’t think I could make a biblical case for #1, though I don’t think the Bible teaches *against* it either. However, #2 is almost explicitly taught in James:

James 1:13-16

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, **“I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**

Notice, “carried away”. And of course, Satan is called “the tempter”.

Matthew 4:1-4

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness **to be tempted by the devil. 2** And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. **3** And **the tempter came** and said to Him, **“If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” 4** But He answered and said, **“It is written, “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON**

BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH
OF GOD.â??â??

Like a drug addict can be â??carried awayâ? by a drug dealer via the addictâ??s desire for drugs, so also, we can be â??carried awayâ? by Satan via our desire for sin. **Thus, thereâ??s a very real sense where we can be enslaved to Satan (*and his minions*) through our sinful desires.**

In this view, man handed the world over to him because after the fall, weâ??re extremely susceptible to being carried away by the devilâ??s temptation because of our desires. And as 2 Peter says: â??by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.â?

Now, that 2 Peter passage above alludes to two passages of scripture.

The first is from Proverbs:

Proverbs 26:11

10 Like an archer who wounds everyone,
So is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by.

11 Like a dog that returns to its vomit
Is a fool who repeats his folly.

12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.

This one seems obvious in meaning: we return to our sin even though it hurts us.

The second allusion in the 2 Peter passage above is fascinating because Peter alludes to a teaching from Jesus, and that parable is about demons.

Peter says in verse 20: â??For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, *the last state has become worse for them than the first.*â? This is a summary of Jesusâ??s teaching on the topic, and weâ??ll look at Lukeâ??s version because itâ??s relatively concise. As you read, keep in mind that:

- The house = a possessed man
- Strong man = the demon possessing the man
- Stronger man = Jesus kicking the demon out

Please keep that in mind as you read:

Luke 11:14-26

14 And **He was casting out a demon**, and it was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed. **15** But some of them said, â??He casts out

demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. 16 Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven. 17 But He knew their thoughts and said to them, Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls. 18 If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. 19 And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges. 20 But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. 22 But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder. 23 He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.

24 When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, I will return to my house from which I came. 25 And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.

Notice that 2 Peter quotes the last clause, and he applies it to more than just demon-possessed men.

In 2 Peter 2, he is talking about *at least* false teachers. Not demon-possessed men, false teachers. This seems to clearly take the application of Jesus's teaching beyond just demon-possessed men and applies it to men who aren't demon possessed as well. It's specifically false teachers, but if you read the passage, it seems to apply to Christians who are wantonly living a sinful lifestyle as well. (Though that's less certain.)

Now, notice how Jesus phrased it: When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed.

Notice:

- his own house
- his possessions

This is ownership language.

This seems like more than just addict to drug dealer language, though Jesus could've been speaking figuratively so that remains a possibility. I don't see it as likely though; possible, but not likely. Again, this is ownership language. Because of that, we'll move on and look at the other possibility: that God gave them this authority.

Fair warning, it'll take a long time to unpack.

However, this study will also reveal the theological backdrop to almost the entire Bible that's usually missed in Christianity these days.

No joke.

Was Satan's authority given to him by God?

This will need an enormous amount of context to unpack. However, while it will require all that context, I have found it to be some of the most fascinating research I've ever done. Plus, it opened my eyes to a whole subtexual arc that runs all throughout scripture that I had never noticed before. Additionally, it's crucial to understanding how Jesus saved us from enslavement to Satan.

We'll begin by front-loading with a clarification.

The "sons of God" versus THE son of God

When Christians hear the phrase "son of God", they will instantly think of Jesus. That's a wonderful, good, and correct thing. However, there is a difference between the "Son of God" singular, and the "sons of God" plural. The most obvious place to see this is the book of Job:

Job 1:6

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

Obviously there aren't multiple copies/versions of Jesus who are being mentioned here. That's obvious. There are other places where the "sons of God" are mentioned as well, and we'll look at those in a moment. However, a tiny spoiler first:

I'm going to make the case that the "sons of God" (*plural*) are angelic beings. However, this does not apply to THE the Son of God (*Jesus*), who is obviously God Himself come in the flesh.

Thus:

- The sons of God (*plural*) = angelic beings.
- The Son of God (*singular*) = Jesus, who is God Himself in the flesh.

That case begins with the verse above in Job. The obvious and nearly self-evident meaning of the phrase "sons of God" in Job 1:6 is angels. In fact, the NIV even translates it that way. You can look at [a bunch of commentaries here](#), or even do some research, and you'll find that it's virtually unanimous that the "sons of God" here are angelic beings. (*There's a debate on if they are fallen or not, but we'll get to that later.*)

This idea that the "sons of God" are angelic beings is reinforced later in Job:

Job 38:1-8

1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,

2 *Who is this that darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?*

3 *Now gird up your loins like a man,
And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!*

4 *Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?*
Tell Me, if you have understanding,

5 Who set its measurements? Since you know.
Or who stretched the line on it?

6 *On what were its bases sunk?
Or who laid its cornerstone,*

**7 When the morning stars sang together
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?**

8 *Or who enclosed the sea with doors
When, bursting forth, it went out from the womb;*

Notice verse 7. The *morning stars* were singing, and the *sons of God* were shouting for joy. This is during creation, so obviously they weren't men. The identification of *morning stars* makes this even more clear, as other parts of scripture attest:

Revelation 9:1

1 Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.

Obviously this star isn't a literal star, because stars are enormous burning balls of plasma that would consume the earth. Just like in Job, we have a being who seems clearly angelic in this case, possibly a fallen angel who is referred to as a star. We see this even more clearly later in Revelation:

Revelation 12:3-9

3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. 4 And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

5 And she gave birth to a son, a male *child*, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished

for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. **The dragon and his angels** waged war, **8** and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. **9** And **the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels** were thrown down with him.

Again we see that angels (including fallen angels) are represented by stars in the Bible, which confirms that the "sons of God" in Job 38:7 are indeed angelic beings. (whether fallen or not.)

These angelic beings are likely called "sons of God" because God created them. Hebrews chapter 1 spends a lot of time demonstrating that Jesus is superior to the angels, so again, please don't confuse the "sons of God" (*plural*) with the Son of God (*singular*).

THE Son of God, who is Jesus and God Himself in the flesh, is most definitely not an angel.

He's God Himself.

This is clearly stated in many places, but we'll just look at one of them.

John 1:14

And **the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us**, and we saw His glory, glory as of the **only begotten** from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The word translated "only begotten" is $\mu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\acute{\nu}\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ([monogenēs](#)), and here's a quote from a lexicon:

3439 $\mu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\acute{\nu}\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ (from 3411 / $\mu\iota\sigma\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\varsigma$, "one-and-only" and 1085 / $\gamma\epsilon\acute{\nu}\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$, "offspring, stock") properly, **one-and-only; one of a kind**; literally, **one (monos) of a class, genos (the only of its kind).**

This same word is used of Abraham's son Isaac as well:

Hebrews 11:17

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and the one who had received the promises was offering up his **only (monogenēs) son**;

However, scripture tells us that Abraham had other sons. Of course there's Ishmael by Hagar, and then Abraham also married a woman named Keturah after Sarah died.

Genesis 25:1-2

1 Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. **2** She bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah. **3** Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim and Letushim and Leummim. **4** The sons of Midian were Ephah and Epher and Hanoah and Abida and Eldaah. All these were the sons of Keturah. **5** Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac; **6** but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east.

So Abraham had 8 sons total, and yet Isaac is still called his "monogenēs" (*only-begotten*) son. **The reason is because of what monogenēs actually means, which we saw just above: It doesn't mean "only", it means "the only of its kind".** Of all of Abraham's sons, only Isaac was born because of a promise from God. That made him unique among Abraham's children.

It's the same with Jesus.

Jesus is the "monogenēs" Son of God because He's unlike the other "sons of God" since Jesus actually ***IS*** God, while the "sons of God" aren't. They are merely created beings who are infinitely inferior to Him.

Hebrews chapter 1 makes this abundantly clear. In fact, that's the whole focus of the chapter. Anyway, now that we've clarified that I'm not a heretic nor denying the Trinity, we'll move on.

The sons of God misbehave

You already know that Satan rebelled, and we saw that a third of his angels were swept from heaven. Additionally, there's another recorded instance of rebellion by these "sons of God", that almost never gets mentioned. Normally I'd look at the passage and go from there, but this time we'll look at the Bible's own commentary on that passage before we look at the passage itself.

Jude 1:6-7

6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, **7** just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since **they in the same way as these** indulged in gross immorality and **went after strange flesh**, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

In Sodom and Gomorrah, the men "went after strange flesh" by trying to fornicate with the angels that had come to visit Lot. (*The whole story is in Genesis 19, and I'm assuming you're familiar with it because it is so well-known.*) Notice also the phrase in Jude: "they in the same way as these". So the angels that Jude is talking about "went after strange flesh" just like the men of Sodom did. **Now, if men going after strange flesh is them wanting to fornicate with angels, then it would make sense that the reverse is true, thus angels going after strange flesh is angels wanting to fornicate with humans.**

If that sounds strange, hang on a moment because that's explicitly stated to have happened in scripture.

No kidding.

As you read the following passage, remember that "sons of God" means angelic beings (*fallen ones in this case*):

Genesis 6:1-4

1 Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, 2 that **the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.** 3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." 4 **The Nephilim** were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, **when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them.** Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

(The story of Noah's ark and the flood comes right after this.)

Thus, it seems clear that some fallen angelic beings ("sons of God") married human women and had children with them. This appears to be the clear teaching of scripture. Now, despite what Jude and Genesis say, some of you will immediately think of what Jesus said in Luke:

Matthew 22:29-30

29 But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection **they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.**

Now, notice two things.

First, marriage is not necessary for someone to have sex. This should be obvious, even though all sex outside of marriage is sinful. (*I have [an article about that](#).*)

Second and more importantly, **Jesus said that the angels "in heaven" are the ones who "neither marry nor are given in marriage"!** but what about the (*fallen*) angels who aren't in heaven? As we saw in Jude, it's obvious that the (*fallen*) angels were in rebellion against God. Jesus says that angels "in heaven" i.e. the ones who aren't rebelling don't do this. He says nothing whatsoever about the angels who fell.

Further, look at the plain text of Genesis 6:1-4 and Jude 1:6-7 again.

We've already seen that the "sons of God" phrase clearly refers to angelic beings, (*fallen or not*) and Jude reinforces this as well. You need to ignore the plain text of scripture to deny that (*fallen*) angels had children with human women.

(Some say that this refers to Cainâ??s descendants having children with Adamâ??s other descendants. However, that ignores what the phrase â??sons of Godâ?• means all throughout the Old Testament.)

Now weâ??ll move on to the next important piece of context.

What are the â??elohiymâ?•?

The Hebrew word â??x•Ö±x?x?Ö´x?x•â?• (elohiym) is the word usually translated â??Godâ?•. However, itâ??s also translated â??godsâ?• (small â??gâ?•) when referring to pagan gods and to other things as well. Most telling is how itâ??s used in 1 Samuel. The following passage is when King Saul goes to a medium to seek guidance about an upcoming battle. He wants to talk to Samuel the prophet, who has long since died, and asks the medium if she can call him up from the dead.

Weâ??ll pick up the story there:

1 Samuel 28:11-14

11 Then the woman said, â??Whom shall I bring up for you?â?• He said, â??Bring up Samuel for me.â?• 12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman said to Saul, â??Why have you deceived me? You are Saul.â?• 13 The king said to her, â??Do not be afraid. What do you see?â?• And the woman said to Saul, â??I see a god (elohiym) coming up out of the earth.â?• 14 He said to her, â??What is his appearance?â?• And she said, â??An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe.â?• And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage.

Even a manâ??s spirit who has died can â?? at least in this case â?? be called an â??elohiymâ?•. Effectively, the Hebrew word â??elohiymâ?• simply means â??spiritual beingâ?•, and thus it can be applied to a wide range of spiritual beings.

The Hebrew word â??elohiymâ?• can be applied to all spiritual beings. It doesnâ??t only apply to the One True and Almighty God, the creator of all things.

There is only one True, Almighty God and He exists in three persons, aka, the Trinity. However, â??elohiymâ?• â?? even though it can be applied to God since He is a spiritual being â?? it can also be applied to other spiritual beings as wellâ?!

â?!including demons.

No joke.

Deuteronomy 32:16-18

16 They made Him jealous with strange *gods*;
With abominations they provoked Him to anger.

17 They sacrificed to demons who were not God,
To gods (*elohiym*) whom they have not known,
New gods who came lately,
Whom your fathers did not dread.

18 You neglected the Rock who begot you,
And forgot the God who gave you birth.

Thus, according to the explicit testimony of scripture, gods (elohiym = spiritual beings) can be applied to demons/fallen angelic beings.

That's important.

Very important.

This is somewhat reinforced in the New Testament as well, since scripture shows that the gods the pagans sacrifice to are actually demons.

1 Corinthians 10:19-20

19 What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, **or that an idol is anything?** **20** **No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God;** and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.

So, gods (elohiym) can refer to demons, and idols are demons.

(Technically, the idol was supposed to be a house for the demon that the demon would inhabit/possess, allowing the worshiper to communicate with the demon. They didn't think it was actually a god, but rather a way to summon a particular god in order to get favors! but that's getting technical. Look into the mouth opening ceremonies for idols for more on this.)

Now, some of you might think of verses like Isaiah where God says that He is the only God.

Isaiah 45:5-6

5 I am the LORD, and there is no other;
Besides Me there is no God.
I will gird you, though you have not known Me;

6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun
That there is no one besides Me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other,

That is 100% true, obviously. There is no one else like Yahweh, God Almighty, the Creator of all things. And yet, scripture clearly records that while no one is like Yahweh/God Almighty, there are other inferior spiritual beings who are called "gods" (*elohiyim*), because "elohiyim" means a spiritual being, and there are other spiritual beings. (*Angels and demons at minimum.*)

Psalm 86:8 There is no one like You among the gods, Lord, Nor are there any works like Yours.

Psalm 95:3 For the LORD is a great God And a great King above all gods,

Psalm 96:4 For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.

Psalm 97:7 Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols; Worship Him, all you gods.

Psalm 97:9 For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods.

Psalm 136:2 Give thanks to the God of gods, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Psalm 138:1 A Psalm of David. I will give You thanks with all my heart; I will sing praises to You before the gods.

Exodus 15:11 "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?"

God is God alone. There are no other "elohiyim" like Him because He is the Triune God and utterly unique. But other "elohiyim" exist because "elohiyim" simply means a spiritual being and there are other spiritual beings. This language of "there is no one beside me" has parallels in scripture just two chapters after the Isaiah 45 passage above, in a prophecy about Babylon:

Isaiah 47:8

8 "Now, then, hear this, you sensual one,
Who dwells securely,
Who says in your heart,
"I am, and there is no one besides me."
I will not sit as a widow,
Nor know loss of children."

(See also *Isaiah 47:10* and *Zephaniah 2:15*.)

Obviously Babylon didn't think it was the only nation; that would be absurd. Rather, Babylon thought that it was a nation far above all others. Likewise, Yahweh/God Almighty isn't the only spiritual being (*elohiyim*), but He stands so far above all the other spiritual beings that they are like dust on the scales to Him.

That goes double because, as weâ??ve already seen, some of the sons of God/elohiym fell and became demons.

The Divine Council

The best place to introduce this concept is Psalm 82, and weâ??ll look at it in the ESV because itâ??s the only translation that gets it right.

(Note: I often harp on how terrible the ESV is as a translation, and you can see the evidence for why [here](#). I havenâ??t changed my mind on that, but on this particular topic, the ESV nails the translation in most places while most others donâ??t, so Iâ??ll be using the ESV a lot more in this particular article. To quote a farming proverb: â??Even a blind hog finds an acorn once in a while.â?)

Psalm 82 (the whole Psalm, ESV)

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods (elohiym) he holds judgment:

2 â??How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah

3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.â?•

5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

6 I said, â??You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you;

7 nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.â?•

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

Notice the phrase â??divine councilâ?•, and notice that â??godsâ?• (other spiritual beings inferior to God) are part of it.

Now, of course the all-knowing and all-wise God doesn't need a council. Obviously. However, He doesn't need us either and yet He chooses to work in and through us to accomplish His will on earth. Apparently, He has a divine council in heaven that He chooses to work through also, even though He doesn't need it.

The divine council is referenced several other times in scripture.

Job 15:7-8 (ESV)

7 Are you the first man who was born?
Or were you brought forth before the hills?

8 **Have you listened in the council of God?**
And do you limit wisdom to yourself?

And again in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 23:16-22

16 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. 17 They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, It shall be well with you; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, No disaster shall come upon you.

18 For **who among them has stood in the council of the LORD to see and to hear his word,**
or who has paid attention to his word and listened?

19 Behold, the storm of the LORD!
Wrath has gone forth,
a whirling tempest;
it will burst upon the head of the wicked.

20 The anger of the LORD will not turn back
until he has executed and accomplished
the intents of his heart.
In the latter days you will understand it clearly.

21 I did not send the prophets,
yet they ran;
I did not speak to them,
yet they prophesied.

22 But **if they had stood in my council,**
then they would have proclaimed my words to my people,
and they would have turned them from their evil way,

and from the evil of their deeds.

And again in Daniel:

Daniel 7:9-10

9 *As I looked,*
thrones were placed,
 and the Ancient of Days took his seat;
 his clothing was white as snow,
 and the hair of his head like pure wool;
 his throne was fiery flames;
 its wheels were burning fire.

10 A stream of fire issued
 and came out from before him;
 a thousand thousands served him,
 and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;
the court sat in judgment,
 and the books were opened.

Notice that *thrones* plural were placed. Not *throne* singular, but *thrones* plural. Further, notice that *the court* sat in judgement. Not just the Ancient of Days (*God*), but *the court* sat in judgement.

There's also a reference to this in Psalm 89, though it's less clear than the others. A point of context first, the word translated *the mighty* in the NASB 95 is *עֹלָם* (*el*). It's used 245 times, and 229 of those times it's translated *God/god* because that's what it usually means. (*Though it can mean mighty in some contexts.*) That exact same word is translated *God* in the next verse, meaning that contextually, *God* is the right understanding. Keep that in mind:

Psalm 89:5-7

5 The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD;
 Your faithfulness also in **the assembly of the holy ones.**

6 For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD?
 Who among the sons of ~~the mighty~~ **God (el)** is like the LORD,

7 A **God (el)** greatly feared in the **council** of the holy ones,
 And awesome above all those who are around Him?

And not about the divine council, but we do have another reference to the *sons of God* in Psalm 29, using the same word that's used in Psalm 89 above

Psalm 29:1-2

1 Ascribe to the LORD, **O sons of the mighty God (el)**,
Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name;
Worship the LORD in holy array.

And perhaps most clearly, we return to Psalm 82:1, where the divine council is clearly and explicitly mentioned.

Psalm 82:1 (ESV)

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 God has taken his place in the **divine council**;
in the midst of the **gods (elohiym)** he holds judgment:

The rest of psalm 82 seems to be about how the members of the divine council â?? or at least some of them â?? were behaving wickedly. Keep that in mind for the next passage because itâ??ll be important and weâ??ll examine it more afterward.

Now, hereâ??s the cool thing: Scripture actually records a meeting of the divine council for us!

No joke.

For context, the kings of Israel and Judah wanted to go to war and a bunch of (*false*) prophets told them that they would be victorious. Then, a true prophet of God is summoned and says the following. (*Though really, I recommend that you read the entire chapter for context, which you can do [here](#); link opens in a new tab.*)

1 Kings 22:19-23

19 And Micaiah said, â??Therefore hear the word of the LORD: **I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left;**
20 and the LORD said, â??Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?â?? **And one said one thing, and another said another.** **21** Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, â??I will entice him.â?? **22** And the LORD said to him, â??By what means?â?? And he said, â??I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.â?? And he said, â??You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.â?? **23** Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you.â??•

God told his divine council that He wanted something done, and the council responded by offering various options until one spirit put forth an option that God allowed. Thatâ??s almost the definition of a council meeting.

Now, it might bother some people that it seems like God is approving of lying here. But remember, it's a lying spirit, not God Himself, and we already mentioned that it seems like at least some members of the divine council were fallen. Again, Psalm 82 seems to make this clear, and notice verse 2 especially:

Psalm 82:1 (ESV)

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 God has taken his place in the **divine council**;
in the midst of the gods (*elohiyim*) he holds judgment:

2 **How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked?** Selah

3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;
maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

4 Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk about in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

6 I said, **You are gods,**
sons of the Most High, all of you;

7 **nevertheless, like men you shall die,**
and fall like any prince.

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;
for **you shall inherit all the nations!**

It seems clear that these comments about judging unjustly and showing partiality to the wicked are directed at the gods, sons of the Most High. Again, this makes perfect sense if some of them not all, clearly, but some of them the sons of God went after strange flesh in Genesis 6:1-4 and fornicated with human women. As we'll soon see, that wasn't the end of their wickedness.

So here we have the sons of God who are gods (elohiyim/demons) apparently in some kind of wicked rulership role.

The question is: how did they get that role? Thankfully, scripture does tell us.

The Table of Nations and Deuteronomy 32

Now, at last, we come to the passages that explain why these fallen "sons of God" (demons) have a rulership role.

Deuteronomy 32:7-9

7 Remember the days of old;
consider the years of many generations;
ask your father, and he will **show** you,
your elders, and they will **tell** you.

8 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.

9 But the LORD's portion is his people,
Jacob his allotted heritage.

(Note: most Bibles say "sons of Israel" instead of "sons of God" in verse 8. However, both the Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint support "sons of God", both of which are significantly older than the Masoretic Text on which "sons of Israel" is based.)

There's so much to unpack here. The important part is (1) the event that's being discussed consisted of dividing mankind and fixing the borders of the people, (2) and the "sons of God" part of verse 8. However, verse 7 lends some important context.

First, notice the last two lines of verse 7. Specifically, that the event in question is known, and more, **it can be shown**. Obviously they didn't have movies, so the obvious application is that the event in question is written down, and that's how it could be shown to someone. That tells us that the event in question was written down in scripture prior to Deuteronomy 32.

Can you think of an event in the first five books of the Bible where God divided up mankind into different nations?

Exactly.

The Tower of Babel.

You all know the story (and if you don't, you can read it in Genesis 11:1-9). In his arrogance, man decided to build a tower up to God, and God responded by dividing them by making them speak different languages. That's when God divided mankind. In fact, Genesis 10 makes it clear that God did the dividing because Noah's son's descendants were divided by **language**.

Genesis 10:5 & 20 & 31

2 The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras. **3** The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah. **4** The sons of Javan were Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim. **5** From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

â?!

20 These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations.

â?!

31 These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.

Curiously, we have the genealogy and separation recorded in chapter 10, and the Babel event recorded in chapter 11. (*The ancient Jews were less concerned with chronology than we are.*) However, we know that this separation refers to the Babel event because of Genesis 11:1.

Genesis 11:1

1 Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.

Regardless, Genesis clearly records them being separated by language, which means that God did the dividing. **The list of nations in Genesis chapter 10 is often called the "table of nations".** It's a list of the nations that God created via the creation of new languages.

But the important part is how He divided man.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9

8 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.

9 But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.

Remember that the "sons of God" are angelic beings, whether fallen or not. Also remember that they are often referred to as "stars" in scripture. Keep that in mind as you read the following passage.

Deuteronomy 4:19-20

19 And *beware* not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and **the stars, all the host of heaven**, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your **God has allotted to all the peoples** under the whole heaven. 20 But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today.

Notice how the stars are clarified to be *all the host of heaven*. If that isn't a clear reference to angelic beings (*fallen or not*), then I don't know what is. Now, notice that God Himself allotted the stars and all the host of heaven (*i.e. the angelic beings called "sons of God"*) to *all the peoples*. This reinforces what we saw in the previous passage where God *fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God*.

But we're not done, there's more.

Deuteronomy 29:24-27

24 All the nations will say, *Why has the LORD done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?* 25 Then *men* will say, *Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.* 26 They went and served other gods and worshiped them, **gods whom they have not known and whom He had not allotted to them.** 27 Therefore, the anger of the LORD burned against that land, to bring upon it every curse which is written in this book;

Again, we see this idea of *allotment*. God allotted the gods (*the "sons of God" /elohiym/demons*) to other nations, not to Israel.

Please notice that the last several verses are all from Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy contains the last instructions from God for Israel before they entered the promised land. This was important stuff, and God reminded them no less than three times about the Babel event, Him disinheriting the nations, and that the pagan *gods* (*demons*) are for other peoples, not Israel. The other *gods* were allotted to the nations.

Notably, even the pagans believed this!

Plato himself said this:

In the days of old, **the gods had the whole earth distributed among them by allotment.** There was no quarrelling; for you cannot rightly suppose that the gods did not know what was proper for each of them to have, or, knowing this, that they would seek to procure for themselves by contention that which more properly belonged to others. **They all of them by just apportionment obtained what they wanted, and peopled their own districts;** and when they had peopled them they tended us, their nurselings and possessions, as shepherds tend

their flocks, excepting only that they did not use blows or bodily force, as shepherds do, but governed us like pilots from the stern of the vessel, which is an easy way of guiding animals, holding our souls by the rudder of persuasion according to their own pleasure; thus did they guide all mortal creatures. Now different gods had their allotments in different places which they set in order. Hephaestus and Athene, who were brother and sister, and sprang from the same father, having a common nature, and being united also in the love of philosophy and art, both obtained as their common portion this land, which was naturally adapted for wisdom and virtue [speaking of Greece]; and there they implanted brave children of the soil, and put into their minds the order of government; their names are preserved, but their actions have disappeared by reason of the destruction of those who received the tradition, and the lapse of age.

Source: Dialogues of Plato, the Jowett translation in 1892, Oxford

Obviously I'm not looking to Plato for Christian doctrine. Obviously. I included this quote so you can see that this is an ancient idea that wasn't limited to Christians and Jews.

So what is this talking about?

Here's the short version:

Both mankind and an angelic being (*Satan*) rebelled in the Garden in Genesis 3. Then in Genesis 6, more angelic beings rebelled against God by fornicating with human women, marking the second angelic/human rebellion. Then after the flood at Babel, man again rebelled. So God saw that mankind didn't want to worship Him and that rebellious angelic beings (*sons of God*) wanted to be worshiped by man.

So God did something He has a long history of doing: He gave both groups what they wanted as judgement.

Romans clearly says that God does this kind of thing, and it might even be talking about this event. That's obviously not certain, but it's possible.

Romans 1:21-25 (*NET Bible, since it gets an important word more literal than most others in this passage*)

21 For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened. **22** Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image resembling mortal human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity, to dishonor their bodies among themselves. **25** They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

This establishes the precedent that God sometimes gives people their sinful desires as judgement. Further, the "sons of God" certainly are part of God's creation, so it's possible that Paul was alluding to the Babel event.

God did this another time as well.

1 Samuel 8:4-8

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; 5 and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations." 6 But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7 The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. 8 Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods so they are doing to you also.

God gave them what they wanted as a judgement on them! Just like at Babel.

Here's the summary:

There were three rebellions in Genesis chapters 3-11, with both the angelic beings and mankind clearly saying that they didn't want to serve God. So at Babel, God divided up the people according to the number of the sons of God, and Deut 4:19 says that God allotted all the peoples to the stars, all the host of heaven (the sons of God/angelic beings) to worship. Thus, all the peoples of the world were allotted to various fallen sons of God since man wanted to worship other gods (demons), and those other gods (demons) wanted worship. God gave them both what they wanted each other as a judgement/punishment on them.

That's how the whole world was handed over to Satan, because he is the leader of the fallen angels.

But wait, it gets worse.

No seriously; sadly, it does get worse.

Remember that you are a citizen of the country you are born into, and thus from birth are subject to the authority of that country's government. For example, before Israel asked for a king, no Israelite was under a king's authority. However, once the kings were instituted, every child born thereafter was under the king's authority. This includes children who never asked for a king; since they were born into the king's land, they were subjects of the king, and thus under his legitimate authority.

It's the same thing after man wanted to be put under the authority of other pagan gods (demons).

Just as every Israelite was under the legitimate authority and dominion of the Israelite kings throughout its generations, so also, because we are the descendants of the men who wanted to be ruled by the "sons of God" (demons) we are under the legitimate authority of Satan and his demons.

(These wicked "sons of God" are almost certainly the demonic kings and princes spoken of in Daniel.)

Man didn't want to be under God's control, so God effectively disinherited the nations and gave control of them to the "sons of God" (demons) because man wanted to worship something else, and the "sons of God" (demons) wanted to be worshiped.

Now, you might object that: "God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, so obviously the nations belong to Him as well."

Of course that's correct. God did create everything and so it belongs to Him. However, that He gave the nations/peoples to these pagan "gods" (demons) is clearly stated:

Deuteronomy 32:8-9

8 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.

9 But the LORD's portion is his people,
Jacob his allotted heritage.

Notice the contrast. The sons of God have the nations, "but" God has Israel. And again:

Psalm 82:8 (ESV)

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;
for you **shall inherit all the nations!**

Notice "shall inherit". Not, "has inherited", but "shall inherit". (*And Hebrew geeks, yes I know you could construe the tense other ways, but that flies in the face of the linguistic context and you know it.*) Anyway, this says clearly that God doesn't have the nations because he will inherit them.

Again, this is because God disinherited the nations at Babel.

Let me stress that the Babel event is a problem of man's own making. This wasn't something that was done to us; it was something we did to ourselves. Like Israel asking for a king and the consequences echoing throughout Israel's history, so also, our ancestors wanted to serve other

gods (*demons*) and so God let them. This was man's fault, not God's!

!but God still decided to rescue us anyway.

He's just that good. ð???

God's plan for rescuing us

Again, we'll go back to our two pillar verses in Deuteronomy to see how that plan began.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9

8 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.

9 But the LORD's portion is his people,
Jacob his allotted heritage.

And again:

Deuteronomy 4:19-20

19 And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. **20**
But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today.

If you look at the table of nations in Genesis chapter 10, you'll notice something strange for Israel's holy book: Israel isn't listed.

Seriously.

Now, that might seem odd, but it really isn't. Why? Two reasons:

1. Israel didn't become a true nation until they left Egypt.
2. Abraham Israel's progenitor was part of another nation. Thus, he was under the legitimate authority of one of the gods (*demons*).

No, I'm not kidding.

The whole world, including every single nation was disinherited by God and given to the dominion of other gods (*demons*). Why would the nation that Abraham came from be any different?

However, God still had a plan.

That plan was the Exodus from Egypt.

The Exodus from Egypt as spiritual warfare

I'll take a moment to mention that I'm building this case in a blindingly fast manner. To lay out a full case would require an entire book, and thankfully, someone already wrote that book. I don't agree with everything in it, but as far as spiritual warfare goes, I think it's spot on. That book is: *The Unseen Realm* by Dr. Michael S. Heiser. He makes a much more lengthy, more detailed, and more scholarly case than I'll make here. Thus, if you want more on this topic, I recommend you get the book. (*My biggest point of disagreement is that he believes angels were created in God's image as well.*)

Anyway!

Scripture explicitly tells us that the Exodus from Egypt was God judging the gods (*demons*) of Egypt.

Numbers 33:3-4 (*recounting their history*)

3 They journeyed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the next day after the Passover the sons of Israel started out boldly in the sight of all the Egyptians, **4** while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn whom the LORD had struck down among them. **The LORD had also executed judgments on their gods.**

And also while God is issuing instructions for the Passover:

Exodus 11:11-13

11 Now you shall eat it in this manner: *with* your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the LORD'S Passover. **12** For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; **and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments**—I am the LORD. **13** The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt.

Now, you can't pass judgement on something that doesn't exist.

That would be an absurdity.

As we saw before, the *gods* which would include the gods of Egypt were in fact demons who convinced man to worship them because that's what demons do. They try to sway man away from God to themselves. In the Old Testament, this usually meant pagan *gods* who were represented as idols. As we already saw above, both the pagan *gods* and idols are actually

demons (*in disguise*).

Plus, as we saw above, in 2 Kings 1:3, God Himself says that Baal-zebul is the "the god of Ekron". Jesus Himself mentions Baal-zebul as we already saw, and He identifies him as "the ruler of demons", so we know he actually exists.

Why would it be different for the other "gods" in scripture?

I want to drive home a point: The pagan "gods" of the Bible are **REAL**. They actually exist.

They are evil/fallen angelic beings (*demons*), but they do indeed exist.

Further, we know that they did have supernatural powers. (Though obviously they are minuscule compared to God Almighty) How do we know they had supernatural power? The book of Job tells us:

Job 1:12 & 18-19

12 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in **your power**, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

!

18 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 19 and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

In context, the wind obviously came from Satan, and God said that Job was in Satan's power. Satan apparently had power over the wind. That's very interesting because there's a Greek god who could do that as well. In their article on Poseidon, greek-gods.org says:

It is also said that after the war was won, he [Poseidon] gave Trojans favourable winds which enabled them to escape and prevented further death

Poseidon controlled the winds. (Which was actually why he was the god of the sea; if you control the wind, you control the sea.) Now, I'm not saying that Poseidon is Satan or anything like that; that would be overstating the data. (Other demons might've been able to do the same thing.) However, I am saying that since Satan clearly had supernatural powers, is it impossible that the other "gods" (*demons*) are both real and have real supernatural power? Wouldn't that be a logical inference from the biblical data?

Scripture is clear that the pagan â??godsâ?• (demons) are real entities, and also that at least one had supernatural power; why couldnâ??t the rest have supernatural power too?

(Likely to varying degrees depending on the specific demon in question.)

Obviously the power of these â??godsâ?• (demons) is absolutely insignificant compared to the power of God Almighty. *Obviously*. Their power is like dust on the scales compared to God Almighty. However, they are obviously far more powerful than mankind.

Why bring this up?

Because of the Exodus from Egypt, and more specifically, to get a proper understanding of the Egyptian gods. If you have supernatural power, like the ability to control wind for example, it would be easy to get ancient people to worship you. **While obviously we canâ??t be sure, it seems likely that the pagan gods (demons) did that.** At least Satan could control the wind, and it seems likely that his inferior demons also had powers. Again, likely to varying levels depending on the specific demon in question. Thus, it wouldâ??ve been childâ??s play for them to convince man to worship them.

Now, please think about the Egyptian pantheon with this context.

Remember, God Almighty said that He was going to judge the â??gods of Egyptâ?•. That tells us that the Egyptian gods were real; they existed. They were demons, but they definitely existed because how could God judge something that doesnâ??t exist? Remember also that Paul said whatever the gentiles (*non-Jews*) sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons. Well, the Egyptians certainly sacrificed to their gods, so logicallyâ?!

You see the point.

Remember that Israel had been living in Egypt for 430 years at the time of the Exodus.

Exodus 12:40-41

40 Now **the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.** **41** And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

What are the odds that Israel started absorbing the Egyptian Pantheon?

As it turns out, exactly 100%:

Ezekiel 20:1-10

1 Now in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, on the tenth of the month, certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me. **2** And the word of the LORD came to me saying, **3** â??Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them,

Thus says the Lord GOD, Do you come to inquire of Me? As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you. 4 Will you judge them, will you judge them, son of man? Make them know the abominations of their fathers; 5 and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD, On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God, 6 on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. 7 I said to them, Cast away, each of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. 8 But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.

Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. 9 But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made Myself known to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt. 10 So I took them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness.

(Note: some in the PSA camp will say that this passage proves the Passover lamb was a penal substitutionary sacrifice; we'll examine that later in the article.)

Israel had been in Egypt for over 400 years; of course they started believing in the Egyptian Gods!

If you know anything of Israel's history, this shouldn't surprise you. If it does surprise you, I humbly suggest that you read the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings again. Or really, almost any Old Testament book will do because it seems like Israel abandoned Yahweh every five minutes.

Thus, God needed to break the Hebrews of the pagan gods they had accepted.

However, there's one more thing that God needed to do when He brought His people out of Egypt: He needed the gods (*demons*) of Egypt to release their legitimate claim on Israel. For reasons that will become obvious later, God needed literally no one and nothing to have a claim on His people except Himself alone.

We'll get to the verses proving this later, but the point of the Ten Plagues was to make the gods (*demons*) of Egypt release their legitimate claim on Israel, so that Israel could belong to God alone.

Obviously more happened there, but for the purposes of this article, that's what we'll focus on. (There's an obvious element of foreshadowing to the cross as well, which is where this is all going.) The Exodus recounts Israel leaving Egypt after God used the Egyptian gods' (*demons*) spheres of influence/power against them. Likewise, the cross was Jesus defeating Satan and his minions using

Satan's own power (*death*) against him.

That's why God didn't just deliver a military victory, as He has done so many times in the Old Testament. **God didn't want or need a military victory; He wanted a pardon the expression but He wanted a legal victory.** He wanted the gods (*demons*) of Egypt to release the Israelites from their legitimate authority over them!

!but I'm getting ahead of myself.

For now, we'll look briefly at each of the plagues using scholarly quotes on what the gods of Egypt were like, and how their defeat by God Almighty would've been humiliating.

The Ten Plagues as Iconoclastic Spiritual Warfare

My contention is that God was solving two particular problems via the Ten Plagues:

1. Forcing the Egyptian gods (*demons*) to release their legitimate claim on Israel
2. Breaking Israel of the worship of the Egyptian gods.

He apparently decided to do this through an **iconoclastic** display of power. For normal people who don't use "iconoclastic" in everyday conversation, here's the definition:

- Of or pertaining to iconoclasm, or to the opinions and practices of the Iconoclasts; **given to breaking images, or to exposing errors of belief or false pretensions: as, iconoclastic enthusiasm.**
- *adjective* Of or pertaining to the iconoclasts, or to image breaking.
- *adjective* **Characterized by attack on established beliefs or institutions; of or pertaining to iconoclasm.**
- *adjective* destructive of images used in religious worship; said of religions, such as Islam, in which the representation of living things is prohibited

[Source.](#)

Iconoclasm is breaking religious images in a literal sense, and breaking someone's mental image of their religion in a metaphorical sense. That's what God did at the Exodus.

God Almighty, through the ten plagues, utterly smashed and completely obliterated the illusion that the gods (*demons*) of Egypt were as powerful as He Himself was.

Again, this served two purposes in my estimation:

- It showed Israel that He was more powerful to break them of the worship of the Egyptian gods
- It metaphorically brought the gods of Egypt to their knees so they would release Israel from their authority

God Almighty thus executed judgments against all the gods of Egypt to prove that his power was greater, and also to make them release Israel.

So, we'll now go through each of the plagues. A note first, many of the quotes below come from the podcast notes of Michael Heiser's podcast series on Exodus, specifically the one on Exodus chapters 8-10, which you can find [here](#). It was nice to find almost everything in a single source, except the 10th plague, which he didn't cover to my satisfaction, so we'll look at some additional data on that.

(You might wonder why there's such detail on the plagues below when this article is already long. That's because it's context needed to properly understand the full scope of how Jesus saved us. I understand if you want to skim, but please read at least the context and setup section and 10th plagues carefully, as the 10th is the most important, and the context and setup section has needed context. I would highly recommend you read all of it though.)

The Ten Plagues: context and setup

Michael Heiser has this to say:

The cumulative effect of the plagues on the Egyptian view of cosmic order and the king's role in maintaining it is a major issue in the plagues. From Dynasty 4 onward [MH: the Old Kingdom era, the pyramid age], the pharaoh bore the title "Son of Re." As such, **he was the god of the Egyptian state** and was responsible to maintain the cosmic order (**Maat**) on earth that had been established by Re at creation (Frankfort 1978: 51-56). Because of the bond that existed between the created order and the king as the incarnate "Son of Re," [MH: of course **he's also the incarnate Horus**] he was responsible for the fertility of the land as well as for the proper function of the Nile, and because of the strong bond between the sun god, Re, and the king, he was the one who illuminated the two lands, i.e., Egypt [MH: Upper and Lower Egypt] (Frankfort 1978: 56-59). The vitality of the land was ensured by a number of annual festivals and related rituals over which the king presided.

The nine plagues certainly showed that a cosmic struggle was in progress, and they challenged the king's ability to maintain that cosmic order. If the king failed to execute his duties properly, the land would suffer, i.e., it would be in a state of chaos (isft), which is how Egyptian literature describes the 1st and 2nd Intermediate periods.

[Source.](#)

After the famous "Let my people go" command and Moses's staff turning into a snake, Pharaoh still won't capitulate, and Michael Heiser's says this:

Pharaoh's resistance to what Moses is doing turns out to be like the last straw. And then God says, "Okay, I'm going to take over from here." And the confrontation (when God enters the picture, as it were when it's an undeniable act of God) therefore shifts to not Moses versus Pharaoh or Moses versus Pharaoh's magicians. **Now it's God versus Pharaoh, who is the living Horus in Egyptian thinking. Pharaoh was considered the incarnation of a deity. In Egyptian theology, the pharaoh was thought to be the living incarnation of Horus, the son of Re.** And as soon as the pharaoh dies, his son (the next in line) becomes the new Horus. (This was the thinking.)

[Source.](#)

The Egyptians believed that the pharaoh was literally one of their gods, Horus, in human form? maybe because he was possessed?

Possibly?

There's actually some evidence of this:

It has long been known that the Egyptian pharaoh was regarded as divine in Egyptian culture. He was the son of Re and the mediator between the gods and humankind. **During the royal coronation, he was transformed into a manifestation of the god Horus.** He could be referred to as a ntr (divine being, god), and was regularly described in inscriptions as "the good god" or "perfect god" (ntr nfr). By the New Kingdom period, **the king's divinity was believed to be imbued by his possession of a divine manifestation of the god Amun-Re called the "living royal ka", which came upon him at his coronation,** and which was also renewed during the yearly opet festival held in the Luxor temple in Thebes.

[Source.](#)

Amun-Re was the king of the Egyptian gods, and by possessing the Pharaoh, Pharaoh became Re's son, thus becoming a manifestation of the Egyptian god Horus. (who was Re's son in their mythology.)

To me, this sounds like possession.

(While doing this research, I even found a website devoted to Egyptian witchcraft that suggested the same thing, though I won't link to it for obvious reasons.)

When Pharaoh spoke, he spoke for the gods of Egypt; that will become very important soon.

Again, this is because they believed he was a god (*Horus*) incarnate, likely because he was possessed, but that's speculation that can't be confirmed. It makes sense though.

The First plague: The Nile Turns to Blood

This is the first of the smack-downs that God Almighty delivers to the Egyptian gods (*demons*).

Now the Nile's annual flooding is referred to as "the inundation" in academic literature. That was actually deified. The inundation itself was like a deity concept or a deity figure. Currid notes:

[The Nile's] inundation was deified and personified as the Egyptian god Hapi. In fact, as early as the Pyramid Texts the Egyptians called the Nile River by the divine name Hapi (hÉ¾pi).

In Egyptian theology, all life comes from the Nile. So it's bad news if the Nile is polluted. And **Hapi**, the personified deity figure—the deification of the inundation of the Nile! And when the Nile floods, you realize what happens. The Nile overflows its banks, and that deposits rich soil on either side of the Nile. That's why things can grow. And this isn't just a few yards. This is miles of soil. This is how Egyptian people eat. They can't grow their crops in sand and in the desert. They depend on the regular annual inundation of the Nile to survive. **They refer to the inundation as the deity Hapi.** Well, Hapi is either not doing the job or Hapi is weak. He or she (it's a hybrid figure) is weak compared to the God of Israel. **The God of Israel has mastered Hapi.** It's the God of the Hebrews that Pharaoh will not recognize who actually controls the Nile. It's a theological lesson, and a pretty frightening one, and one that would make the Egyptians angry—especially Pharaoh. It would probably frighten most of the populace, but Pharaoh knows what everyone else in the room is thinking—what everyone else in the country is thinking. **You're the son of Re. You are the maintainer of Ma'at. Do something about it.** And he can't. He just can't. It's a public humiliation. It's a public display, not only of Pharaoh (perceived as a deity incarnate), not only of Pharaoh's fecklessness, but also Hapi's.

[Source.](#)

The "god" who was supposed to protect the Nile and make it flood, couldn't. Pharaoh, who was supposed to be an incarnate god couldn't do anything either. Remember that the Nile is *the* source of **all** life in Egypt. **Without the Nile, the Egyptian empire immediately ceases to exist and they all die.** God opened with a bang, demonstrating that He has the power of life, not their "puny god" (*allusion intended*).

This is a beatdown!

and it only gets worse.

The Second plague: Frogs

Next, Yahweh goes after bigger "game".

So Currid has a comment here on the second plague. He says:

> The second plague (Exod. 8:1-6) also appears to be a contest between deities. The Egyptians regarded the frog as a symbol of divine power and a representation of fertility. **One of the main goddesses of Egypt was Hekhet, who was depicted as a human female with a frog's head. She was the spouse [MH: and this is important] of the creator-god Khnum. He fashioned human bodies on his potter's wheel, and then Hekhet blew the breath of life into them and assisted as midwife at their births**

So the plague of frogs, very naturally, is going to hearken back to that imagery. She is the one who breathes the breath of life into the new humans that Khnum creates on his potter's wheel. So Currid adds here:

Hekhet also had the responsibility to control the multiplication of frogs in ancient Egypt by protecting the frogs from frog-eating crocodiles.

!;

Very obviously, Hekhet is not in control here. It's Yahweh who is multiplying the frogs. So it's a pretty direct attack on Hekhet, and against Ma'at generally.

But Yahweh overwhelmed Hekhet and caused her to be impotent in her task. She could not repel or resist Yahweh's overpowering regeneration of frogs. It was the Hebrew God who really bestowed fertility; he rapidly produced frogs so that they would be a curse upon Egypt. **The theme is the sovereignty of God over fertility, over Egypt, over her deities, and over all things.**

So if you're an Egyptian and you see this happen, you're going to be thinking theological thoughts, and they're not going to be comforting. **Hekhet is essentially getting taken out to the woodshed. She is not in control. Yahweh is overtly cast as superior because he's dominating her in her realm. This is how a lot of these plagues are going to work.**

[Source.](#)

Let me repeat that last line so it isn't missed:

Yahweh is overtly cast as superior because He's dominating her in her realm. This is how a lot of these plagues are going to work.

That's the whole point. God Almighty is indeed almighty, and the whole world will know it when He's done. He reminded the gods (*and their representative Pharaoh*) who's really in charge so they will release God's people from their authority and control.

Next, God sweeps the leg.

The Third and Fourth Plagues: gnats and flies

Note: the Hebrew word translated "gnats" isn't a very specific word and thus could also mean fleas, lice, or even mosquitos, since it generally refers to very small biting/stinging insects. **So yes, it could've been the plague of mosquitoes.**

That's the stuff of nightmares.

And one examples is Herodotus in Book II, Section 37, **when Herodotus is commenting on Egypt's priests** (not specifically on the plagues, but Herodotus is going to get into that). **He makes an observation about the priests that takes us into this territory of the third and fourth plagues.** He writes:

[Egypt's] **priests shave the whole body every other day, that no lice or aught else that is foul may infest them in their service of their gods.**

Now the point here that Herodotus is alluding to is that these priests would shave their bodies to avoid their bodies being home to **lice or gnats or anything else that would render them unclean and disqualify them from temple service of their gods.** Now obviously, that is impossible during these two plagues. The plagues robbed! If you're a priest, and your home is infested with gnats and flies or whatever these flying insects were, **you're not going to be able to be completely rid of them, which means you are ceremonially (ritually) unclean, which means you cannot serve your god.**

!

They actually say to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." So it's worse than just being rendered ritually impure so that you can't maintain the Egyptian cult, the worship of the gods, and all the stuff the Egyptians thought they had to do to maintain Ma'at on earth and keep the gods happy and all that stuff. It's not just that bad. **It's that they are supposed to have power to perform miracles, granted to them by the gods, of course. And in this demonstration, they fail. They are beat. They can't do it. So Yahweh is just demonstrated point blank as being superior.** So the God of the Hebrews is defeating Pharaoh. He is de-creating and reversing Ma'at. He's showing who is really in control of order on earth, and really in heaven as well, because that's the realm of the gods. And these priests! **at every point, and specific Egyptian deities too! The plagues are an assault on the whole Egyptian theology, their religious worldview, and their religious system.**

[Source.](#)

They believed that the priests needed to perform their functions to get favors from the gods, so God made it impossible for the priests to fulfill their duties; this was God cutting off the false gods' power at the knees. No priests = nothing from the gods. But as Heiser alludes to, this strikes against specific Egyptian gods too.

Got Questions says this:

The third plague, gnats, was a judgment on Set, the god of the desert. Unlike the previous plagues, the magicians were unable to duplicate this one and declared to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19).

The fourth plague, flies, was a judgment on Uatchit, the fly god. In this plague, God clearly distinguished between the Israelites and the Egyptians, as no swarms of flies bothered the areas where the Israelites lived (Exodus 8:21-24).

[Source.](#)

This bears a quick look at the iconoclastic elements of both:

The gnats/lice/fleas/mosquitoes.

Set, the god of the desert, actually lost control of the earth supposedly his domain to God Almighty. Thus, the domain of one of the Egyptian gods began attacking the Egyptian people. That's pretty obvious proof that Set wasn't in charge of the earth. As pointed out above, the Egyptian magicians couldn't replicate this miracle. They failed, and thus God Almighty made it clear that they couldn't hope to maintain Ma'at (the proper order of creation). Only Yahweh could do that.

The flies

Here's a quote I found about the Egyptian fly god:

Uatchit, the Fly God, symbolizes protection, vigilance, and resilience in ancient Egyptian culture.

!

Uatchit, an ancient Egyptian deity, was venerated for protection, especially in Lower Egypt where flies were prevalent, as indicated by archaeological findings like amulets and pyramid texts.

[Source.](#)

This is especially interesting in light of Psalm 78:45

Psalm 78:45

He sent swarms of flies that devoured them, and frogs that devastated them.

We aren't talking about piranhas of the air or anything, but some flies do indeed bite, and it can bloody well hurt. **The flies that represented their god of protection started attacking them. Let that sink in for a moment.**

Seriously.

God couldn't be more clear here: Uatchit doesn't have power and he couldn't protect the Egyptians because God Almighty was making his own creatures (*flies*) attack the people that Uatchit was supposed to protect. The creature of the god that was supposed to protect you is attacking you instead.

Consider what this would be like as an Egyptian living in this time. If you're an Egyptian, Yahweh is humiliating every god that you've always believed in, including the one that was supposed to protect you. **It would be worldview shattering to witness.**

The utterly humiliating beatdown continues!

The Fifth Plague: death of livestock

Next, Yahweh starts hitting more than one Egyptian god (*demon*) at once.

Currid notes:

Plague five was the pestilence on the domesticated animals [MH: just generally, and he's going to loop in something really important here] of Egypt (Exod. 9:1-7). Bull cults, of course, are known to have flourished throughout the land [MH: of Egypt] in antiquity. **Ancient Egyptians viewed the bull as a fertility figure, the great inseminator imbued with the potency and vitality of life.** Apis was the most important of the Egyptian sacred bulls. Other bull cults included Buchis (sacred bull of Hermonthis) and Mneuis (Heliopolis). In addition, bulls were understood as embodiments of the great Egyptian gods Ptah and Re. Numerous important female deities were pictured as livestock animals: **Isis, queen of the gods, bore cow's horns on her head; Hathor was given a bovine head for her task of protecting the king.** The livestock animals provided necessities to the people in the form of food, milk, clothing, transportation and they were destroyed in the fifth plague. **The biblical author is again demonstrating that Yahweh was sovereign over and in control of all things. The Egyptian gods were imposters**

Here with the livestock there is going to be an assortment of Egyptian deities that are going to be one-upped that are going to be defeated, that are going to be under the thumb, that are going to be diminished and belittled by the Hebrew God. It's an unmistakable thing to an Egyptian witness to these sorts of events.

[Source.](#)

Consider for a moment how many Egyptian gods associated with cattle are mentioned above, and that's not all of them either. God Almighty has moved from humiliating single gods to humiliating large swaths of them in a single plague.

Again, that would be *devastating* to the Egyptian people's trust in their gods.

The Sixth Plague: boils

But it gets worse!

Michael Heiser quoting Currid

Instead, the malady may have been directed against the Egyptian goddess Sekhmet, the lion-headed deity of plagues. She was responsible for epidemics in ancient Egypt, but ironically she also had the power to heal those who were visited by pestilence. The priests of Sekhmet, one of the oldest medical fraternities in antiquity, included both doctors and veterinary surgeons. Other gods regarded as divine physicians and healers included the Theban god Amon-Re, whom a text from Dynasty 19 describes as "he who dissolves evils and dispels ailments; a physician who heals the eye without having remedies, opening the eyes and driving away the squint" Amon. Rescuing whom he desires he makes a lifetime long or shortens it.

[Source.](#)

But this is also another swipe at the priests, since God made sure the following was recorded:

Exodus 9:11

11 The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians as well as on all the Egyptians.

Going back to the 3rd plague, Yahweh completely takes out their entire priestly system with this plague. No priests = no method of appealing to their gods = the Egyptians are utterly powerless.

Michael Heiser quoting Rendsburg:

While not lice, the boils [MH: he's talking about the plague of boils now] constitute a different skin affliction, which also would have rendered the Egyptian priests unable to serve the gods. To my mind, it is not a coincidence that the contest between the *ḥartumim* [MH: the magicians], on one hand, and Moses and Aaron, on the other, ends with the third plague of lice, and that the *ḥartumim* appear only once (in a cameo appearance as it were), during the telling of the sixth plague of boils. The attack on the lector-priests by extension represents an assault on the heart of Egyptian

religion, for without priestly service in the temples, the cults are inoperative, the deities are ineffective, and all of Egypt descends into turmoil.

[Source.](#)

So now, the Egyptians are starting to despair that they or their land can ever be healed because their gods of healing have been humiliated, and the priests can't perform the rites to call on the gods anyway.

The Seventh Plague: Fiery hail

And now, the heavens themselves assail the Egyptians!

Currid writes:

The catastrophe of the hail was a mockery of the Egyptian heavenly deities!

Don't they have power to stop the hail? If they were really gods, if they were really powerful! When I say if they're really gods, yes, they're spirit beings that exist and we have spiritual warfare in this and all that sort of stuff. What I mean is, if they were really powerful, if they really had authority to overrule what the God of the Hebrews is doing, wouldn't they do it? Of course the point is, they don't. They don't have that ability. So Egyptian heavenly deities, like **Nut**, who is the female representative of the sky! She is in other texts and pictures the personification of the vault—the dome over the earth, the vault of heaven. **Shu** is the deity that supports the heavens, holds up the sky. **Tefnut**, the goddess of the moisture in the atmosphere! these are all heavenly deities. They are deities that are supposed to reign in the regions from which the hail comes. And they're not doing anything. They can't touch this, is the point. So if you're an Egyptian, you're wondering, Hey, why doesn't one of these gods that we worship do something? And the only conclusion you can draw (because the Egyptians aren't all of a sudden going to turn into atheists or modern rationalists here) is that the God of the Hebrews is superior, and that means we're in heap-big trouble.

[Source.](#)

Yahweh just smacked around a whole cluster of supposedly powerful Egyptian gods (demons) like it was child's play. He's really driving the point home.

The Eighth Plague: locusts

And now, Yahweh hits all of them.

Currid writes here in regard to this:

Locusts were a particularly nasty problem in ancient Egypt. On account of that danger, the ancient Egyptians worshiped the god Senehem, who was the divine protector against ravages from pests. An identification problem exists because Senehem appears to have been a minor deity in dynastic Egypt. Why Yahweh would have concerned himself to mock a subordinate deity is a problem. **Perhaps protecting against grasshopper attack was a function not merely of one god, but of the gods in general. A hint of that possibility appears in the Tanis Stele from the reign of Taharqa (Dynasty 25), which speaks of "a fine field, which the gods (plural) protected against grasshoppers."**

[Source.](#)

So here, God takes a scattershot approach and yes, hits a minor deity, but more importantly, He shows that they **all** are weak and impotent. But it's about to get even worse. God Almighty is about to deliver His most devastating blow yet.

The Ninth Plague: Darkness

I don't think I can overstate how crushing this one would've been to the Egyptians.

Currid writes:

The ancient Egyptians regarded **Amon-Re, the personification of the sun, as their chief deity.** They believed that Amon-Re in his rising in the east symbolized new life and resurrection—in fact, they considered him to be the creator-god! Just hold that point in your head. **Every day, when the sun rose, to an Egyptian, it's Amon-Re rising from the realm of the dead. It's a resurrective image.** So you have Amon-Re rising, and he gives new life to the land. The sun is going to be out, which means the plants are going to grow. Animals are going to eat. We're going to eat. You have to have the sun, very obviously. **So they believed that Amon-Re in his rising in the east symbolized new life and resurrection! But when Amon-Re sank in the west [MH: when the sun set], he represented something different and antithetical; he symbolized death and the underworld.** When Yahweh so willed (Exod. 10:21-29), the sun was darkened, and Amon-Re was hidden and unable to shine upon his worshipers. [MH: He's unable to rise, in effect.] During the ninth plague Amon-Re did not rise again and did not give life; his realm was death, judgment, and hopelessness.

This is a big deal. I think of all the plagues! Obviously the Egyptians were going to get freaked out by all of this stuff, and they can tell that it's an assault against their religion, against their gods, against their Pharaoh, who is supposed to be a god (Horus incarnate, Re incarnate), but **I think this one would have been the most frightening, because it's like, "Well, did he just kill Amon-Re?" Because they can't see the sun. The sun is**

darkened, and so thereâ??s something wrong here. Amon-Reâ??their â??creator god,â?? the highest, the chief deity in Egyptâ??is now subject to Yahweh. If youâ??re an Egyptian, this is unmistakable imagery. You canâ??t fail to notice (obviously) whatâ??s going on around you. You canâ??t fail to comprehend what it means. It means that the God of the Hebrews is in complete, absolute, dominant control over the gods you worship. And youâ??re just hoping that Pharaoh will let these people go so that Maâ??at can be restored. Because if it isnâ??t restored, youâ??re going to die. The whole land is going to die. Itâ??s the end of Egypt.

To draw an analogy, this would be like someone showing you concrete proof that God the Father was dead. Obviously thatâ??s impossible, but it might give you a sense of what the Egyptians were going through. **This was mindset/worldview *shattering*.** Itâ??s almost impossible to overstate how devastating this wouldâ??ve been to the Egyptians.

But the last and worst is still to comeâ?!

The Tenth Plague: Death of the firstborn

Right up front, this one will take a lot longer because thereâ??s a lot more going on. **However, itâ??s extremely important context for how Jesus saved us from the dominion of Satan.** God seemingly likes to make history rhyme and often foreshadows future events with past events. So it is with the exodus and the cross.

So please bear with me while I lay out the case.

Humiliating yet another Egyptian â??godâ?? (demon)

Context for starters: have you ever wondered why the Egyptians hated shepherds?

Genesis 46:33-34

33 So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, â??What is your occupation?â?? **34** that you shall say, â??Your servantsâ?? occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we *and* also our fathers,â?? that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; **for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.**â??

Two more pieces of evidence will make it clear, one from scripture and one from history. Scripture first:

Exodus 8:25-27

25 Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, â??Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.â?? **26** But Moses said, â??It is not right to do so, for **we will sacrifice to the LORD our**

God what is an **abomination** to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice what is an **abomination** to the Egyptians before their eyes, **will they not then stone us? 27** We must go a three days journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as He commands us.

Any guesses what was an abomination for the Hebrews to sacrifice in front of the Egyptians? Likely so (*my readers tend to be sharp*), but history makes it even more clear. In the south of Egypt, there's an Island called Elephantine Island. About 400 years before Christ, a group of Jews were living there and they built a temple to God there.

History records this event happening, and **notice the name of the Egyptian god mentioned.**

In 410 b.c.e., **the temple of the Elephantine Jews was destroyed by the priests of the adjoining temple of Khnum** (Cowley 1923: 30) after it was looted for gold and silver. The most common explanation for the act of destruction is that **the priests of Khnum were angered by the sacrifice by the Jews of animals sacred to Khnum, particularly the sacrifice of sheep during Passover** (Cowley 1923: 21). Three years after the destruction, the Elephantine Jews applied to the Persian governor of Yehud for permission to rebuild the temple. Permission was given, but **on condition that animal sacrifices would no longer be made there** (Porten 1968: 292). It is not known how much longer after this the Jewish temple stood, but the account of the community in the papyri ends in 399 b.c.e.

[Source.](#)

Who was Khnum? Well, this might explain a lot:

Khnum, ancient Egyptian god of fertility, associated with water and with procreation. Khnum was worshipped from the 1st dynasty (c. 2925-2775 BCE) into the early centuries CE. **He was represented as a ram with horizontal twisting horns or as a man with a ram's head**. Khnum was believed to have created humankind from clay like a potter; this scene, with him using a potter's wheel, was depicted in later times. The god's first main cult centre was Herwer, near Al-Ashmān in Middle Egypt. From the New Kingdom (1539-1075 BCE) on, however, **he was the god of the island of Elephantine**, near present-day Aswān, and was known as the lord of the surrounding First Cataract of the Nile River.

[Source.](#)

For those who don't know, a ram is an adult male sheep. It's what a male lamb grows into.

Make sense now?

The Egyptians considered sheep in general including rams and lambs as extremely sacred. The sacrifice of a lamb at Passover on Elephantine Island caused the priests of Khnum to go ballistic and destroy the Hebrew temple there. Again, remember that Moses said: *If we sacrifice what is an abomination to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not then stone us?* **Sacrificing a sheep of**

any kind, including a lamb or ram, was an abomination to the Egyptians because of their veneration of Khnum, the ram god. That's why they would've stoned the Hebrews if they had sacrificed a sheep/lamb/ram in Egypt.

But there's more.

There's a reason that Khnum held such a special place in the mind of the Egyptians, even though he wasn't the king of the gods like Re. In some ways, Khnum was even more important than the king of the Egyptian gods (*Re*). We'll look at part of a quote we saw earlier from Heiser's podcast, then another one to get more context.

One of the main goddesses of Egypt was Hekhet, who was depicted as a human female with a frog's head. **She was the spouse of the creator-god Khnum. He fashioned human bodies on his potter's wheel, and then Hekhet blew the breath of life into them and assisted as midwife at their births**

Re brought life indirectly as the sun god, but Khnum directly created all human life.

That's a big deal.

Khnum was originally a water god who was thought to rule over all water, including the rivers and lakes of the underworld. He was associated with the source of the Nile, and ensured that the inundation deposited enough precious black silt onto the river banks to make them fertile. The silt also formed the clay, the raw material required to make pottery. As a result he was closely associated with the art of pottery. **According to one creation myth, Khnum moulded everything on his potter's wheel, including both the people and the other gods.**

In Iunyt (Esna, in the 3rd Nome of Upper Egypt) **it was proposed that Khnum also created the "First Egg" from which the sun was born (as Nefertum, Atum or Ra).**

As well as creating the body and the "ka" (spirit) of each newborn child, he could bless the child.

[Source](#).

In Egyptian thought, Khnum created all human life. But don't miss the last part of the first paragraph; according to at least one understanding of the origin of the Egyptian gods, Khnum created the other Egyptian gods too.

It's not overstating it to say that Khnum was the Egyptian god of **life.**

In Egyptian thinking, Khnum gave life to literally everything, even the other Egyptian gods.

Khnum was a big deal!

and Yahweh's answer was the plague of death.

There's an implicit threat in the final plague: *I killed all the firstborns in one night, so I could kill every last Egyptian just as quickly and there's literally nothing that you or your puny gods could do about it.* That's the message. **The message was that Yahweh not the Egyptian gods, but Yahweh alone has the power over their lives.**

But God wasn't done.

He made it worse.

Right before He proved that Khnum was utterly powerless, Yahweh told Israel to do something utterly sacrilegious and abominable to those who worshiped Khnum, something that no Egyptian would've considered doing. Remember, they left on the Passover, and on Passover they sacrificed a lamb!

and Khnum was the ram-god.

Likely because Khnum the ram-god was the god of life, it was an abomination to kill sheep in Egypt. You just didn't do that and God knew it. That's why Moses told Pharaoh that the Hebrews couldn't sacrifice in Egypt because they presumably sacrifice a lamb/sheep/ram because the Egyptians would stone them. Thus, Yahweh's command to sacrifice a lamb on the day He humiliated the ram-god Khnum had a clear purpose.

Khnum, Yahweh, and the Passover: declare your allegiance

The Hebrews had been living in Egypt for over 400 years at the time of the Exodus. **They knew how the Egyptians would react if they killed a lamb and smearred the lamb's blood on their doors.** Maybe you could kill a lamb in secret, but smearing its blood on your doors is literally impossible to keep secret. Remember how Moses said the Egyptians would react: stoning. Remember how the priests of Khnum reacted to the slaughtering of a lamb for Passover on Elephantine Island.

Killing a lamb and smearing its blood on your doors in Egypt, where they worshiped the ram-god Khnum, well, those were fighting words.

That was God's point. (Or at least part of it.)

Maybe you could kill a lamb in secret, but smearing its blood on your doors is literally impossible to keep secret. Again, that was God's point.

The Hebrews knew who Khnum was and what the Passover sacrifice was: it was a declaration of allegiance to Yahweh by giving Khnum and the entire Egyptian religious system the finger!

•

It was a clear statement that the Hebrews were going to follow Yahweh and not the Egyptian gods, not even the one who supposedly gave life to everything.

This is iconoclasm.

This is God smashing the Egyptian religious system so thoroughly that it would be clear who had the real power. He took on all of Egypt's gods and handed them resounding and humiliating defeats in what was supposed to be each god's area of strength. **The only way to be spared was to perform a deed that was abominable to the Egyptian gods as Yahweh commanded; to turn from the Egyptian gods to the One True God, Yahweh Almighty.**

The smearing of the blood was a declaration of allegiance: it was a sign to God Almighty that you had chosen Him over the puny Egyptian gods, as it is written:

Exodus 12:12-13

12 For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and **against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments** I am the LORD. **13** **The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live**; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

The blood was a sign.

That's what it was.

Putting the lamb's blood on the doorposts was Israel's declaration of faith, of them choosing Yahweh over the Egyptian gods.

That's important.

Yes, it was iconoclasm to the Egyptian system, but more importantly, it was an act of faith and faithfulness to Yahweh. And again, that's the point.

Now, later in the article, we'll sidetrack for a bit and ask if the Passover supports PSA. That's coming, but now at last we'll see how the Exodus freed Israel from Pharaoh, and more importantly, freed Israel from the legitimate authority and dominion that the Egyptian gods (*fallen angels/demons*) had over Israel.

Go, worship Yahweh

The passage is really quite short and somber in tone, which is fitting:

Exodus 12:29-32

29 Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle. **30** Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead. **31** Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, "Rise up, **get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said.** **32** Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also."

There's a crucial line there that's often missed. Remember that Yahweh divided the nations into their lands and fixed their borders.

Deuteronomy 32:8

8 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.**

The gods (*demons*) had geographical authority over those who lived in their area. Israel came under the authority of the Egyptian gods because they lived there and were welcomed into the land. (*I'd love to sidetrack for a few thousand words and show how geographically-focused the understanding of the gods is in the Old Testament, but alas, that would take up too much space. Please see *The Unseen Realm* by Michael Heiser for more information.*)

They were not only told to leave Egypt, and thus the territory of the gods of Egypt, but they were specifically told to go worship the True God instead of the Egyptian gods (*demons*). Remember that Pharaoh was considered a divine incarnation of the gods who was able to speak for them. He was their emissary and thus spoke with their authority, and most likely he was possessed by one of them as well. (*though of course we can't know for sure.*)

Pharaoh the emissary of the Egyptian gods (*demons*) who could speak for them and likely was possessed by one told Israel to leave the territory of the Egyptian gods, and to go serve the One True God: Yahweh.

Thus, Israel was released from the legitimate authority, control, and dominion of the Egyptian gods (*demons*) and given back to the One True God: Yahweh.

The gods (*demons*) of Egypt no longer had any legitimate claim over them. None. The gods (*demons*) of Egypt had released their claim over Israel. **Thus, Israel was the first nation (*since Babel*) that belonged solely to Yahweh, and Yahweh alone.** This is likely why God calls Egypt his firstborn

sonâ?•.

Exodus 4:22-23 (*God speaking/prophesying to Moses*)

22 â??Then you shall say to Pharaoh, â??**Thus says the LORD, â??Israel is My son, My firstborn.** **23**â??So I said to you, â??Let My son go that he may serve Meâ??; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.â?•â??â?•

(Notice the parallelism: Egypt was killing Yahwehâ??s firstborn â?? the babies thrown into the Nile for example â?? and so God killed Egyptâ??s firstborn.)

Now, the reason that God had to remove Israel from the authority and dominion of the other gods was almost certainly Jesus. Jesus was born a Jew, and if the Jews were still under the legitimate authority and dominion of Satan and His demons, then Jesus wouldâ??ve been under their authority too, which wouldâ??ve beenâ?! bad. Thus, personally, I think part of the reason God made sure to remove Israel from demonic authority/dominion was so that Jesus wouldnâ??t be under their authority. Weâ??ll come back to this later.

The subtextual arc of the entire Old Testament

Satan and his demons like â??their houseâ?•, as Jesus phrased it in the parable we covered earlier. The enemy isnâ??t stupid. He was there when the first prophecy of Jesus was issued.

Genesis 3:14-15

14 **Then the LORD God said to the serpent:**

Because you have done this,
you are cursed more than any livestock
and more than any wild animal.
You will move on your belly
and eat dust all the days of your life.

15 I will put hostility between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed.

**He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.**

This is almost universally understood to be the first prophecy about Christ. Jesus dealt Satan a devastating defeat on the cross, while Satan only delivered a minor blow to Jesus. **Now, we should take a moment to recognize that the first prophecy about Christ is about the defeat of Satan.** Itâ??s not about Godâ??s wrath against sin.

Now, I wonâ??t actually make the above into an anti-PSA argument. Many do, but I think thatâ??s overstating the text. Itâ??s certainly noteworthy, and indeed should be considered, but itâ??s not an

anti-PSA argument for one simple reason: This first prophecy about Christ doesn't mention cleansing from sin either. So if you want to use this as an anti-PSA verse, you should also use it as an anti-cleansing-from-sin verse as well. Obviously that's absurd because Jesus's death and resurrection can and did save us from more than one thing.

Anyway!

Satan knew this was coming; he heard the prophecy, and the entire rest of the Old Testament is Satan and his demons trying (and failing) to thwart the plan of God.

Obviously there's the temptation in the Garden, but then you also have the "sons of God" incident in Genesis 6, the Tower of Babel incident, then once the nations are under the control of these demons, they proceed to turn them toward the worst sort of wickedness imaginable. Thus, of course they don't want to let go of the people through whom God had promised to save the whole world (*Israel*), but God applied pressure until they folded.

Once Israel was free, the entire Old Testament records these false gods and these demons doing everything they can to destroy or corrupt God's people. Why? We aren't told explicitly, but it seems likely that they knew the means of their defeat would come through Israel. Thus, if they could destroy Israel, they could prevent their defeat. Obviously we can't know for sure, but that seems likely.

This is the subtextual arc of the entire Old Testament: it's all spiritual warfare, even if it takes place on the physical plane.

It's God Almighty versus the "puny gods" (*demons*) as they try and fail to stop God's ultimate plan. As Paul wrote, every pagan God such as Baal, Asherah, Molech, etc., plus all the idols were ultimately demons, and of course they were trying to mislead mankind in general, and especially Israel, likely because they knew that's where their defeat would come from.

It's war.

It's a spiritual war.

As Paul put it:

Ephesians 6:11-12

11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against **the schemes of the devil.** **12** **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

This isn't a new state of things either. It's always been like this, ever since the fall.

Ecclesiastes 1:9-10

9 That which has been is that which will be,
And that which has been done is that which will be done.
So there is nothing new under the sun.

10 Is there anything of which one might say,
“See this, it is new?”
Already it has existed for ages
Which were before us.

Since the fall, it’s always been this way.

Jesus turned it up several notches though; He launched a frontal assault on Satan’s kingdom and the enemy reacted in a predictable fashion.

We’ll look at that now.

The coming of the warrior lamb: Jesus Christ

In the book of Amos, writing in the mid 700s BC, God inspired this:

Amos 8:11-12

11 “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord God,
“When I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water,
But rather for hearing the words of the LORD.”

12 “People will stagger from sea to sea
And from the north even to the east;
They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD,
But they will not find it.”

A few hundred years later, this prophecy came true during the [400 silent years](#). Between the final Old Testament prophet and the appearance of the angel to Zacharias to announce the birth of John the Baptizer, God didn’t speak to His people. There was a famine for the hearing of the words of the Lord. The last words that God inspired were written through the prophet Malachi, who ends the book with this:

Malachi 4:5-6

5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. **6** “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

After that final promise, God didn't speak for 400+ years.

Now, consider this from the enemy's perspective.

For 400+ years, you've had relative peace without God's meddling. You've gotten the Roman Empire to conquer Israel and God's people honor Him with their lips while their hearts are far from him. Honestly, things are going pretty well for you. For the enemy, all is quiet on the Western Front!

Then suddenly, an angel shows up.

Luke 1:13-17

13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. **14** You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. **15** For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. **16** And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. **17** It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

This angel quotes the last prophecy in the Old Testament, announcing that God (*who is your enemy if you're a demon*) is about to do something **big**. Suddenly, the entire kingdom of Satan is a Defcon 1. It's all hands on deck because you know something **BIG** is about to happen.

Six months later, the war room in hell gets more really bad news when another angel shows up. 400+ years of silence and then two angels in six months.

Luke 1:30-33

30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. **31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; **33** and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

If you're the enemy, this is the worst news possible.

The long-promised savior is coming. You do everything in your power to stop this, including getting the local ruler to try and kill the baby by killing all the Hebrew babies in the region (*sound like Egypt?*), but it's all for naught.

The messiah, the long-feared King is here.

You're freaking out. This is the worst thing to happen to the demonic kingdom since the dreadful debacle in Egypt fourteen centuries ago. However, you can't take direct action against Him yet. So you wait for an opportune moment.

It finally comes.

Jesus is baptized and then the demonic king himself tries to tempt Jesus. Here's the problem: neither Satan nor his demons knew what Jesus's plan was. Scripture states this explicitly.

1 Corinthians 2:7-8

7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 *the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;*

Let me repeat that:

Satan and his demons didn't know what Jesus's plan was; they didn't know how God would save mankind.

Keep that in mind.

So first, Satan tries to get Jesus to act without God on His own by turning stones to bread. Jesus refuses. Then Satan tries to offer Jesus literally *everything* he has; all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship. Jesus again refuses.

Now Satan is in a bind.

He can't get Jesus to sin, and he knows the prophecies, so what to do? *Satan tries one last tactic: he tries fishing for information.* (*More details on that [in this YouTube video](#).*) That doesn't work either. So then the devil leaves Him until an opportune time. Then Jesus and John start preaching the same message:

Matthew 3:1-2

1 Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 2 *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

And after the temptation, Jesus says the same thing:

Matthew 4:17

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”**

If you're a demon, it feels like Jesus is taunting you: He's about to set up His own kingdom where you have your kingdom. It's like He's declaring war!

Then Jesus goes on a rampage, ravaging Satan's kingdom.

Consider, you're a demon who has been working on oppressing Israel (*and all mankind*) for millennia now. Suddenly, Jesus is healing everyone you've worked hard to keep sick, He's raising the dead, and He's casting out demons — even a whole legion of demons — with a word. Worse, people are repenting in droves. Jesus is taking a sledgehammer to Satan's kingdom. If you're a demon, all your hard work is going down in flames in just a few years. People are repenting left and right,

If you're a demon, you have to get rid of this guy.

Possessed men won't do it because Jesus just casts the demons out, so being a demon, you try something sneaky: get actual men to do it. It works. Through treachery and guile, you get one of His disciples to help. Jesus is arrested, tried in a sham trial that would make the most dishonest demon proud, and finally, He's crucified.

The demons have won and you — being one — are celebrating your greatest victory: you've killed God Himself!

All of hell is rejoicing, watching Jesus slowly die and awaiting the moment that He finally expires and God Himself dies. Maybe you even feel a sense of victory, perhaps thinking that if you can kill one member of the Trinity, why not more of them?

The demons count down the seconds to their final victory, watching Jesus slowly slide toward death and their ultimate triumph!

Then He dies.

There's the largest cheer ever heard in all of hell's history as every demon celebrates their victory over God Himself!

but.

To paraphrase the Lord of the Rings movies: *But then, something happened that the enemy did not intend.*

Just like all the demons thought would happen, Jesus descended to the place of the dead, as it is written:

1 Peter 3:18-19

18 For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God, **after being put to death in the fleshly realm but made alive in the spiritual realm.**

19 In that state He also went and **made a proclamation** to the spirits in prison

We won't get bogged down discussing who Jesus was making a proclamation to. (Some say *righteous dead*, some say *wicked dead*, some say *it's the demons in chains that Jude speaks of*.) However, we do know the content of the message from a few verses later:

1 Peter 4:6

6 For **the gospel** has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to *the will of God*.

There in the underworld, in the place of the dead where Jesus was, He begins to preach again. You, as a demon, are amused, laughing at how silly this is! until Jesus Himself begins to proclaim the gospel. The one that has been hidden in long ages past which you had never known; that gospel.

Slowly, your mouth widens in horror as you realize what you've just done.

Jesus tricked you.

Jesus tricked the demons into the greatest self-own in all of cosmic history.

Jesus tricked you into killing Him so that He could become exactly like man and give His life to fallen mankind without killing them (as we covered in [this article](#)). Suddenly, everything that was foretold in scripture crystalizes as you realize how badly you screwed up. The demons have brought about their own downfall, tricked by Jesus into cooperating in the plan of salvation! and there is Jesus proclaiming the Gospel and it almost feels like He's rubbing your face in it!

!then many of the righteous men who are listening all of a sudden disappear from the land of the dead, and you realize what's happening back on Earth.

Matthew 27:50-53

50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. **51** And behold, **the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom**; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. **52** **The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised**; **53** and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

That's when you remember Jesus's words:

Matthew 16:18

18 I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build **My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.**

(Hades is the place of the dead, i.e. the underworld.)

And then it gets worse for the demons. Then Jesus explains how His death completely disarmed the spiritual forces of darkness.

Christus Victor: What was the document nailed to the cross?

The phrase "Christus Victor" is Latin and means "Christ victorious". The phrase is also the name of one of the theories of how Jesus saved us, notably first used by Gustaf Aulen in his book of the same name. Virtually no Christian will deny that Christ was victorious over Satan at the cross. However, the means of victory differs depending on which school of thought you ask.

The important passage is in Colossians 2. However, before we look at it, please remember way back to near the beginning of this article where we discussed the Greek word *στοιχείων* (*stoicheion*), which was more accurately translated "elemental spirits" in that passage, and I would argue this one as well. In fact, Bill Mounce who literally wrote a Greek textbook that many seminaries use to teach Greek agrees on this point in these verses, which you can see by looking at how he translates it [here](#). The previous lexical quote nearer the beginning of this article agrees as well.

Anyway, here's the passage:

Colossians 2:8-15 & 20

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the **elementary principles spirits (stoicheion)** of the world, rather than according to Christ. **9** For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, **10** and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; **11** and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; **12** having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. **13** When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, **14** **having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.** **15** When He had disarmed the **rulers and authorities**, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

A PSA-believing Christian will say that the *certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us* in verse 14 refers to our sins and guilt before God.

Here's that verse from a PSA perspective, from John Piper:

Then verse 14 makes explicit that this nailing of the record of our debt to the cross canceled the record of our debt (Colossians 2:14). It is canceled. **The debt is canceled because the debt of punishment that we owed to the justice of God has been paid in the punishment of Christ on the cross.**

!

Satan can do a lot of damage to us physically, emotionally, and relationally in this world, but he can only condemn us or damn us or bring us to eternal ruin in one way namely, by a valid accusation of our sins before a holy God.

If he can do that, we're done for. If he can make our sins stick in the courtroom of heaven as he accuses us before the judge of the universe, we're doomed; we're hopeless. And the point of verses 13 and 14 is that the record of debt that Satan could use to accuse us and condemn us has been nailed to the cross. **The one damning weapon that he has namely, unforgiven sin, with which he could accuse us has been stripped out of his hands.**

[Source.](#)

Now, PSA seems to have a valid understanding of the passage.

However, it doesn't have the *only* valid understanding of this passage.

Now, the important word in the passage is *cheirographon*, which the NASB translates as *the certificate of debt*.

cheirographon, *cheirographon*, *cheirographon* (and *cheirographon*), **a handwriting; what one has written with his own hand** (Polybius 30, 8, 4; Dionysius Halicarnassus 5, 8; others); **specifically, a note of hand, or writing in which one acknowledges that money has either been deposited with him or lent to him by another, to be returned at an appointed time** (Tobit 5:3 Tobit 9:5; Plutarch, *mor.*, p. 829 a. de vitand. aere al. 4, 3; Artemidorus Daldianus, *oneir.* 3, 40)

And again:

Usage: The term *cheirographon* is used in the New Testament to describe **a written record of debt or obligation**, particularly in a spiritual or legal sense. It appears in the context of discussing the cancellation of such debts through Christ's redemptive work.

Here's the problem with the PSA understanding: it doesn't describe a record of debt or obligation. It describes a list of sins.

Those aren't the same thing.

Not at all.

Now, scripture does indeed tie debt and sin together in a few places, which we'll look at now.

Sin as a debt?

The most famous place this comes up is the Lord's prayer:

Matthew 6:9-13

9 Pray, then, in this way:
Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our **debts**, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]

The Greek word translated "debts" is *opheilōma*, and it means:

From (the alternate of) *opheilo*; **something owed, i.e. (figuratively) a due; morally, a fault or debt.**

And also:

a. **properly, that which is justly or legally due, a debt;** so for *Deuteronomy 24:12 (10)*; *1 Macc. 15:8*; *Plato, legg. 4, p. 717 b.*; *Aristotle, eth. Nic. 9, 2, 5 (p. 1165a, 3)*. as of debt, *Romans 4:4*.

b. **in imitation of the Chaldean *šum* (which denotes both debt and sin), metaphorically, offence, sin** (see *Aristotle, eth. Nic. 9, 2, 5 (p. 1165a, 3)*); hence, *to remit the penalty of one's sins, to forgive them,*

(Chaldean אֲשֶׁר־אֵינוֹ מֵעַל־הַדֶּבֶר), Matthew 6:12. (Cf. Winer's Grammar, 30, 32, 33.)

I personally think that ἀποφειλοῦσθαι is an ideal way to translate the word. That makes sense of the word ἀποφειλοῦσθαι later, which is the related Greek word ἀποφειλοῦσθαι (opheiletai), which means:

From opheilo; an ower, i.e. **Person indebted; figuratively, a delinquent; morally, a transgressor (against God) ἀποφειλοῦσθαι debtor, which owed, sinner.**

And also:

Usage: The term ἀποφειλοῦσθαι is used in the New Testament **to describe individuals who are in debt, either financially or morally.** It appears in contexts that emphasize the obligation or duty one has towards another, often highlighting **the spiritual or ethical dimensions of indebtedness.**

This makes sense in light of Luke's record of the Lord's prayer, which simply uses the normal Greek word for sin (*which is ἁμαρτία/hamartia*), and then uses another ἀποφειλοῦσθαι word as well.

Luke 11:2-4

2 And He said to them, ἀποφειλοῦσθαι When you pray, say:
ἀποφειλοῦσθαι Father, hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.

3 ἀποφειλοῦσθαι Give us each day our daily bread.

4 ἀποφειλοῦσθαι And **forgive us our sins,**
For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation. ἀποφειλοῦσθαι

The word translated ἀποφειλοῦσθαι there is ἀποφειλοῦσθαι (opheiletai), and it means:

3784 opheilo (a primitive verb, NAS dictionary) ἀποφειλοῦσθαι **to owe, be indebted, i.e. obliged to rectify a debt (ἀποφειλοῦσθαι ought).**

3784 /opheilo (ἀποφειλοῦσθαι) refers to being morally obligated (or legally required) to meet an obligation, i.e. to pay off a legitimate debt.

[3784 (opheilo) ἀποφειλοῦσθαι originally belonged to the legal sphere; it **expressed initially one's legal and economic, and then later one's moral, duties and responsibilities to the gods and to men, or to their sacrosanct regulations.** . . . opheilo expresses human and ethical responsibility in the NT (DNTT, 2, 662.663).]

There's one more verse to loop in before application.

Luke 13:1-5 (NKJV)

1 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, **do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?** 5 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

That word translated "sinners" is *opheiletas* ([opheiletas](#)), which is the same word translated "debtors" in Matthew 6. (*as we forgive our debtors*) Thus we do see the implication that "sinner = debtor" in scripture.

Thus, sin and debt do seem connected in scripture.

With that in mind, we'll head back to Colossians 2.

Debt to whom?

Colossians 2:14 very clearly states that we had a debt/obligation to someone or something.

Colossians 2:13-15

13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 **having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.** 15 When He had disarmed the **rulers and authorities**, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Now, there are a few elements here that we need to examine because they are often missed.

"having canceled"

The Greek word thusly translated is *exaleipho* ([exaleipho](#)), and Mounce's lexicon has this for the meaning: (*gloss means a good translation of a word, and I'm using Mounce because it's more accurate and concise than Biblehub for this word.*)

Gloss:

to wipe away, **blot out**, cancel

Definition:

pr. **to anoint or smear over**; hence, to wipe off or away, Rev. 7:17; 21:4; **to blot out**, obliterate, Col. 2:14; Rev. 3:5; met. to wipe out guilt, Acts 3:19*

Now, we don't write by dipping pens into bottles of ink anymore, so "blot out" might not be familiar to you. If you wanted to erase something back before white-out, there were two ways to do it. One was to remove a little bit of the surface you were writing on so the ink came off. The other way was to "blot out" the writing by adding more ink until the original writing was covered by a small ink blot, and thus it was impossible to read. That effectively erased it. (*You've probably done something similar with a pen before.*)

Dictionary.com has this on the phrase "blot out":

Obliterate, wipe out of existence or memory, as in *At least one Indian nation was blotted out as the pioneers moved west*, or *The trauma of the accident blotted out all her memory of recent events*. **This idiom, first recorded in 1516, uses the verb to blot in the sense of making something illegible by spotting or staining it with ink.** The New Testament has it (Acts 3:19): "Repent ye that your sins may be blotted out."

Source.

Now, notably, **This cuts directly against PSA.** According to PSA, God can't "blot out" our sins. If sin is a debt, then in PSA thinking, that debt must be paid, and it was paid by Christ being punished vicariously in our place as our substitute on the cross. According to PSA, God can't simply "cancel" (*blot out/erase*) our sins. In PSA, we have a debt and the bill always comes due; always.

Now, if this verse isn't talking about our sins or a "debt to God" but something else, then PSA has no problem with this verse at all.

Regardless, the nuance of "cancel" versus "blot out" is important.

Please keep that in mind.

Now, on to the second part that's usually missed.

"consisting of decrees against us"

"Decrees" is a perfect translation, though "edicts" would also be excellent. This same word is used in Ephesians when referring to the Mosaic Law. However, the other uses are more in line with the use here:

- **Ephesians 2:17** by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments contained in **ordinances**, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace,
- **Luke 2:1** Now in those days a **decree** went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

- **Acts 16:4** Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the **decrees** which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.
- **Acts 17:7** and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the **decrees** of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.â?•

What decree/edict was â??against usâ?•?

Some say itâ??s the Mosaic Law based on Ephesians 2:17, but that doesnâ??t track very well if you read the Colossians 2 passage in context. Hereâ??s the end of it:

Colossians 2:20-23

20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles spirits (*stoicheion*) of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, **21** â??Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!â?• **22** (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)â??in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? **23** These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.

Notice, â??self-made religionâ?•.

That phrase combined with the earlier statements and focus on â??elementary spiritsâ?• of the world seem to indicate we are talking about false religion, not the Mosaic law. Further, this epistle wasnâ??t written to Jews; it was written to Gentiles who had never been under the Mosaic Law. Ever. Thus, it doesnâ??t make any sense that this is referring to the Mosaic Law.

That begs the question: what are the decrees against us?

Well, given the repeated mention of â??elementary spiritsâ?•, and also of the â??rulers and authoritiesâ?• (*referring to spiritual beings like in the â??amour of Godâ?• passage*) being disarmed in verse 15, it probably has to do with them. That would make a lot more sense in context and would also explain the use of the phrase â??which was hostile to usâ?•, which weâ??ll look at now.

â??which was hostile to usâ?•

In that phrase, the word translated â??hostileâ?• is â??á½?ï?îµ½±½ï?î?â?• ([hupenantios](#)), and it means:

Usage: The word á½?ï?îµ½±½ï?î? appears in the New Testament to describe entities or forces that are in opposition to one another. It is used to highlight the nature of conflict or contradiction.

Context: The Greek term ἀντιπαρθετός is found in the New Testament, specifically in the context of spiritual and moral opposition. It is used to describe the nature of entities that stand in direct contradiction to one another, often in a spiritual or ethical sense.

ἀντιπαρθετός

The use of ἀντιπαρθετός in the New Testament underscores the theme of spiritual warfare and the victory of Christ over forces that are contrary to God's purposes. It highlights the transformative power of Christ's work in overcoming opposition and reconciling believers to God.

Now, many say that ἀντιπαρθετός *the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us* is a reference to the Mosaic Law. However, the phrase ἀντιπαρθετός *which was hostile to us* seems to rule that out because of what scripture says elsewhere about the Mosaic Law:

Romans 7:9-13

9 I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? **May it never be!** Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

The Mosaic Law was, and is, good. It showed us that sin was sinful to lead us to Christ, as it is written:

Galatians 3:23-25

23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Scripture clearly teaches that the Mosaic Law was good, not hostile to us and not our enemy. (Though of course, it also says that Christians don't need to obey it; see the passage quoted just above.)

The law wasn't hostile to us; it was our tutor to lead us to Christ. Thus, whatever the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us is, it can't be the Mosaic Law, because the Mosaic Law wasn't hostile to us.

Thus, we need some decree(s) that are actually hostile to us; that are actually doing us harm. Thankfully, there is a good option.

Wiped clean: the certificate of debt/obligation to Satan and his demons?

As we covered at exhaustive length, God judged man and the "gods" (*demons*) by giving both of them what they wanted: man wanted to worship (*seemingly*) anything other than the One True God, and the demons wanted to be worshiped. So after the Tower of Babel event, according to Deuteronomy 32:8, God **decreed** that the nations would be given to the "gods" (*demons*).

At the risk of sounding obvious, that's a decree.

God issued a group of decrees, assigning each nation to a different "god" (*demon*). Those decrees were certainly hostile to us because they put us under the legitimate authority of demons. Therefore, we had a (*metaphorical*) certificate of debt/obligation to those demons because we were under their legitimate authority.

Now, how did Jesus save us from that?

The answer is in the text: "having ~~canceled~~ **blotted out the certificate of debt** consisting of decrees against us". That begs the obvious question: why didn't God just cancel it for Israel instead of going through the whole "ten plagues" thing in Exodus? We aren't told, but I think we can guess: God doesn't go back on His word. He gave the "gods" (*demons*) authority over mankind because we wanted to serve someone else. He doesn't just take that kind of thing away!

!but that doesn't mean He can't blot it out.

Yes, I know the NASB and other translations don't say "blot out", but the specific language is important, which is why we looked at it above. The enemy had a "document" (*metaphorically speaking*), and the writing on that document gave the enemy control of the nations. God wasn't going to just rip up the document, but He could blot out the handwriting by superseding it with a superior claim.

That's what Jesus enabled at the cross.

How?

I'll admit it's not spelled out for us, sadly. However, I think it's not hard to piece together the clues in scripture, and John gives us a huge clue.

John 17:20-23

20 I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; **21** that they may all be one; **even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us**, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. **22** The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, **that they may be one, just as We are one;** **23 I in them and You in Me**, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

Have you ever noticed the phrase "in Christ"? Yeah, I probably shouldn't detour this already absurdly long article to talk about that! sadly.

Anyway!

Notice the phrases "I in them" and "that they also may be in Us".

John 14:16-17

16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, **that He may be with you forever**; 17 *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, **but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.**

Consider also what Ephesians says:

Ephesians 1:13-14

13 **In him you also**, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, **were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**, 14 **who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it**, to the praise of his glory.

We "were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit". As John 17 said, the whole point is that what Jesus said: "they also may be in Us".

When we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit fuses with our spirit so that God is in us.

Importantly, **the fact that our spirit has joined with God's spirit affects the devil's claim on us.** Consider what Jesus said in John:

John 14:30

30 "I will not speak much more with you, for **the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me**;

Jesus never sinned, so the devil couldn't lay a claim on Him that way. Jesus also was born an Israelite, meaning that Satan had no claim on Him via the "handing over" that happened at Babel. And of course, Jesus is also God Himself come in the flesh.

- The devil had a claim on us because of Babel.
- The devil has no claim whatsoever on God; the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit.
- God has a claim on Christians because the Holy Spirit joined with our spirit and thus He indwells us.

Thus, both have legitimate claims on mankind, including Christians.

The question is, when you have two competing claims on the same person, whose claim wins?

Well, let's look at the facts. The enemy has authority because God gave it to him. However, when we become Christians, the Holy Spirit fuses with our spirits so that we are "in Christ". If we remain "in Christ", you can't separate God from us. So then, in order for Satan's claim to stand, he would need to also have some claim on God. Obviously that's absurd. Perhaps he might've been able to make some claim on Jesus if the Exodus event hadn't freed Israel from the "gods" (demons) of Egypt. However, the Exodus happened after the gods of Egypt released their hold on Israel, and thus Satan has no claim on Jesus/God at all.

None.

That's what frees us.

We have been joined with God Himself through the Holy Spirit's indwelling. Because of that, God Himself has the superior claim on us. God's superior claim overwrites it; it blots out the claim that the enemy has over us!

but only for Christians.

God's superior claim over us is because of the Spirit's indwelling. Without the Spirit indwelling us, the enemy's claim on us is still 100% legitimate and valid. **That should be scary.** Not for Christians; we're fine and safe. But for unbelievers that you know! yeah; that should scare you on their behalf because they are "held captive" by the devil to do his will.

Notice: unbelievers are "held captive".

This is why the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, because they haven't been freed yet. **That's (part of) what the gospel is: it's an unbeliever's ticket to freedom to escape from the legitimate authority and dominion of Satan and his demons.**

In a physical war on Earth, you take the territory to win and increase your influence. It's the same with the spiritual war, but the "territory" is us; it's mankind. Every single person who turns from Satan to God robs the enemy of another small bit of his "territory": mankind. Every single person who is saved weakens Satan's kingdom and strengthens God's kingdom.

Jesus promised a kingdom that wasn't of this world. His kingdom's "territory" is made up of souls who turn to God. Every soul who turns to God robs the enemy of more of his "territory".

That makes evangelism spiritual warfare.

Yes, I know we don't usually talk about it this way, but it is.

Revelation 12:7-12

7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "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, he who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 **And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony,** and they did not love their life even when faced with death. 12 "For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because **the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.**"

For most of my life, I've heard people quote the first part of verse 11 (*ironically, often ignoring the second half*) and it never made sense to me before. Now it does. The blood of the Lamb refers to Jesus's ability to save us from Satan through "blotting out" Satan's claim with His own superior one, and the "word of their testimony" is believers sharing their testimony in evangelism. Those who are convinced by the testimony convert, and thus they are transferred from Satan's kingdom to God's kingdom, robbing Satan of a little more "territory" with every soul won to Christ.

Again, evangelism is spiritual warfare.

Remember, God disinherited the nations at Babel, but He never forgot about them.

In fact, even as far back as Abraham, He was predicting that He would bring the gentiles back into the fold:

Genesis 22:18

"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

There are countless references to the salvation of the gentiles in the Old Testament. You're likely familiar with many of them so I won't make this article longer by quoting them, but they're definitely there. However, God waited to begin saving the Gentiles en masse until He could free them from Satan's dominion. And once He could, oh man, did He start doing so with a bang.

The Book of Acts: D-Day for the Kingdom of God

On June 6th, 1944, Allied forces launched "Operation Overlord" to land tens of thousands of Allied troops on the beaches of Normandy. This operation was the largest seaborne invasion in man's

history and was conducted to establish a beachhead in Europe to use as a foothold from which to liberate Europe from the Nazi occupation. It was one of the most pivotal moments of the war, and it marked a decisive turning point.

It's the same with the book of Acts and the advance of the Kingdom of God.

In Acts, especially chapter 2, God is establishing a beachhead in the disinherited nations to use as a foothold from which to liberate the nations from the dominion of the gods (*demons*).

If you look at the nations/places mentioned in the book of Acts, especially Acts 2, it's a march through the table of nations that God disinherited at Babel.

Now, Acts 2 doesn't list all of them, but more are mentioned as the gospel spreads in Acts. Beginning with Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, then the remote parts of the Earth, the gospel spreads.

Michael Heiser writes this:

But to make the summary as short as I can possibly make it, **what happens in Acts 2 looks back on the division of the nations in Genesis 10-11. Genesis Chapter 10, of course, the Table of Nations, and of those nations are the ones referred to in Chapter 11 of Genesis with the Tower of Babel incident, where God has to punish nations and divide and disperse the people all over the Earth.**

!

And if you look at the nations that are listed in Acts chapter 2, they proceed from the east, the easternmost presence of where the people of God are scattered in the foreign nations, moving westward and, again, the video gets into Paul's sense of being the apostle to the Gentiles. It was his mission to get to, to sort of migrate through all the way to the farthest nation mentioned in the Table of Nations, so that the quote-unquote "fullness of the Gentiles" could be brought in. Again, he was very conscious of this whole idea that the nations had to be reclaimed and that God had sort of through the exile seeded Jews in those places. Of course, they come to Pentecost. They take the gospel back to nations with them. And then it's Paul's job to go into those nations that have been infiltrated, at least with the seed thoughts of the gospel, and to start churches, to preach the gospel himself, and, again, to reclaim that which had been disinherited in the distant past. And so that is really what's going on in Acts chapter 2.

[Source.](#)

Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, knew about this worldview.

Acts 17:24-27

24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; **25** nor is He served by human hands, as

though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; **26** and **He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27** that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

This is almost a direct reference to Deuteronomy 32:

Deuteronomy 32:7-9

8 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.

There are other clues as well, but they would take rather a long time to unpack so I'll link to a YouTube video instead if you want more on this. **The short version is that Paul's missionary trips weren't random; he was marching through the Table of Nations trying to get every last one of them,** likely because he was the apostle to the gentiles. That's why he mentions wanting to get to Spain so much, because it was one of the last places on the Table of Nations that he hadn't reached.

Anyway, if you want an overview, [this video](#) provides it, especially the second half. If you'd like a more thorough treatment of this, Michael Heiser's podcast series going through the book of Acts highlights this regularly. His series on Acts starts at #35, and you can find the full list [here](#).

It's a good listen.

Now, think about this from the enemy's perspective.

It's fifty days after Jesus died and you're still reeling from the shock of how Jesus tricked you into killing Him so He could save mankind. You're livid. You're seething at the shame and humiliation of having brought about your own downfall. Jesus already gave the gospel (*good news*), but it sounds like the worst news possible to the demons. However, that hateful God-man has finally returned to heaven and isn't on earth anymore. That's cold comfort for you and your fellow demons, but at least it's something.

Then Pentecost happens.

The Holy Spirit falls on the believers and Peter gets up to preach a sermon. That's when you realize who's listening:

Acts 2:5

5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, **devout men from every nation under heaven.**

You remember it's Pentecost. You remember that according to The Enemy's (*God's*) command, faithful Jews were required to bring an offering on Pentecost according to that hateful book

your king (*Satan*) forced you to memorize so you could lead Israel astray.

Leviticus 23:9-11 & 16-16

15 You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. **16** You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD.

Now, men from all over the nations are there hearing the gospel! the gospel that will free them from your clutches. You realize that that silly little rule requiring them to return for Pentecost was God's plan, set into motion ~1500 years ago, to ensure that the gospel would explode onto the scene. Now they'll go home and start telling their families, their friends, and their neighbors about this gospel that will free them from you and even your most devious allies.

Suddenly, you don't need to worry about one tiny movement centered around Jerusalem; you need to worry about 3000 souls spreading the gospel over much of the known world. **Suddenly, the gospel has a beachhead, a foothold, in over a dozen nations.** This debacle is even worse than that mess in Egypt ~1500 years ago.

You react.

You stir the Jews up to start killing Christians and it works! for a time. But the persecution forces them to spread out, taking their dreadful, abominable gospel to more and more places. Everything you do to attack them overtly only seems to make them stronger.

That's the Book of Acts.

The Book of Acts records the storming of the nations via the gospel to begin retaking the people in those nations for God's kingdom.

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Now, the word translated "nations" is $\epsilon\theta\eta\sigma$ (ethnos), and it's also the word that's translated "gentile". In fact, the KJV translates it "gentiles" 93 times and "nations" only 64. Regardless, the point is the same: The Jews were already freed from Satan's dominion and authority at the Exodus event. The nations/gentiles hadn't been freed. Thus, Jesus said to go free the Gentiles from Satan.

(And of course, there are other elements in the gospel as well. I'm not ignoring that, it just isn't the focus of this particular article.)

Disarming and Humiliating the enemy

We've discussed how Jesus freed us from the enemy's authority at length, but I would be remiss if we didn't spend a little time on the verse immediately after:

Colossians 2:14-15

14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. **15** When **He had disarmed the rulers and authorities**, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

I hate that nearly every translation has a period at the end of verse 14, because verse 15 is part of the same sentence. Now, that's not wrong because Koine Greek didn't use punctuation. In fact, they didn't even have space in between different words (*that didn't happen until the end of the first millennium AD*). However, in Greek, it makes more sense as one continuous sentence.

Anyway, I can still make the important point: **Jesus disarmed the rulers and authorities.**

This harkens back to Hebrews 2, and remember from the article on death that the word "had" there is present tense, indicating a current reality, not past tense as it's usually translated.

Hebrews 2:14

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that **through death He might render powerless him who has the power of death, that is, the devil**,

That's disarming the devil by robbing him of his primary weapon: death. (*Well, he uses temptation that leads to death, but the temptation is just a means to the enemy's goal, which is death.*)

One more quick but important note, the phrase "He made a public display of them", is composed of three words in Greek. Two simply mean "in" and "public" respectively, and the third is [\(deigmatizō\)](#). It's only used in one other place:

Matthew 1:18-19

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. **19** And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to **disgrace (deigmatizō)** her, planned to send her away secretly.

Jesus disgraced in public the rulers and authorities; He publicly humiliated them.

Again, God seems to like making history rhyme. He did the same thing to the Egyptian gods (*demons*) in the ten plagues right before the exodus. Thus, it's not surprising that He did it at the cross as well.

Now, with that out of the way, we'll move on to a discussion of whether Passover supports PSA.

Does the Passover Support PSA?

Mike Winger has a video series he created to defend PSA. In that series, he devotes an episode to covering how he thinks the Passover points to PSA, and he covers the Day of Atonement in that same video as well. I'm going to summarize Mike Winger's case, but you can hear his full case at the [source](#) link below.

Was the Passover about protecting Israel from God's judgement?

Starting about 16 minutes in, he says this:

Now if I'm gonna say Passover involves salvation from judgment from God, the implication is that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is saving us from God's judgment; that's the parallel that I'm trying to build here. This is what Exodus 12 is all about. The Passover lamb was not needed to deliver Israel from Egypt. Think about this: [God] didn't need to deliver Israel from Egypt, not with the Passover lamb, he could have just slew the firstborn: boom, delivery, done. **The Passover lamb was needed in order to keep God from judging Israel the same way he was judging Egypt. That's why it was needed and that's how the Passover teaches penal substitution.** It's in this concept of this lamb and how it's gonna save the firstborn of the people of Israel.

[Source.](#)

He then quotes Exodus 6:6 to establish that God used judgement to bring Israel out of Egypt.

Exodus 6:6

6 Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. **I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.**

Mike then quotes Exodus 12, and his goal is to say that God was judging the Egyptians and Israelites.

Exodus 12:12

12 For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; **and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments**. I am the LORD.

Did you notice the problem with Mike Winger's argument? He failed to read the text carefully. **God explicitly states who His judgement is against, and it's against all the gods of Egypt, not the Egyptians or Israelites.** Now, Mike Winger anticipates this objection and then cites Ezekiel 20 to support his position that God was judging Israel.

Ezekiel 20:5-8

5 and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD, On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God, **6** on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. **7** I said to them, Cast away, each of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. **8** But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.

Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

Again, Mike Winger didn't read the text carefully.

We've all been guilty of this at one point or another, but careful reading of the text matters. It's important. Here's the question: **Based on a careful reading of Ezekiel 20:6-8, who was God going to pour His wrath on?**

Please, read it again and think on it.

I'll wait.

!

!

If you answered: The Hebrews who were (still) worshipping the idols (gods/demons) of Egypt, give yourself a gold star. You have to read the text carefully.

That means you can't make assumptions.

Unfortunately, Mike is assuming that God poured out His wrath on Israel at the Passover but that isn't reading the text carefully; what about the other plagues?

As we covered and Ezekiel explicitly states, Israel was definitely worshipping Egyptian gods (idols/demons). A careful reading of the passage in Ezekiel shows us exactly what is going on. I'm

going to gray out some words to make things clearer.

Ezekiel 20:5-8

5 and say to them, *â??Thus says the Lord GOD, â??On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God, 6 **on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt** into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. 7 â??I said to them, â??Cast away, each of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.â?? 8 â??But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.*

Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

There was a specific day when God (*through Moses and Aaron*) promised to bring Israel out of Egypt. On that specific day, God told Israel to get rid of their idols, but they didnâ??t listen. Scripture records this meeting for us, and I included the previous two verses so you know this is the first meeting of Moses and Aaron with Israel.

Exodus 4:29-28

27 Now the LORD said to Aaron, *â??Go to meet Moses in the wilderness.â??* So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. 28 Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which He had sent him, and all the signs that He had commanded him *to do*. 29 Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel; 30 and **Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses**. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people. 31 **So the people believed**; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.

The words that the Lord spoke to Moses included the promise to rescue Israel from Egypt. (*Such as in Exodus 3:20, among others*.) Ezekiel tells us that on the day mentioned in Exodus 4, God promised to deliver them and told them to get rid of their idols, but they didnâ??t get rid of their idols.

Israel believed, but remember, they lived in Egypt where believing multiple gods was common and accepted. So they believed God, but that doesnâ??t mean they stopped believing in the Egyptian gods.

Remember that Egypt was polytheistic and Israel had lived there for 400+ years. Thus, believing (*and worshiping*) multiple gods had been normalized for Israel. Ezekiel tells us that God commanded Israel

on that day â?? the one recorded in Exodus 4:29-31 â?? to stop worshiping the Egyptian gods (*demons/idols*). Ezekiel also tells us that they didnâ??t listen to God and didnâ??t stop worshiping the Egyptian gods on that day. Thus God revealed to Ezekiel that He decided to â??pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.â?•

Maybe God poured out His wrath on rebellious Israel during the first three plagues which affected the Egyptians and Israel?

Maybe?

That would make sense.

Plagues 4-9 didnâ??t affect the Hebrews, with the possible exception of plagues 6 and 8. However, those plagues are explicitly stated to affect the Egyptians, so a reasonable reading of the text is that they didnâ??t affect the Hebrews. (*There is some debate on that though.*)

Maybe Israel needed to suffer through the first 3 plagues before they were convinced to get rid of their idols?

That would make sense since Ezekiel says that â??on the dayâ?• the God promised to rescue Israel from Egypt, He told them to stop worshiping the pagan gods/demons/idols. If Israel didnâ??t listen, wouldnâ??t it make perfect sense that they got hit with the first three plagues just like the Egyptians did?

That is much more likely than Mike Wingerâ??s version, especially considering what Exodus has to say about the Hebrew participation in Passover.

Exodus 12:28 (*right after the instructions for Passover*)

28 Then the sons of Israel went and did so; just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

No idol worship here, just obedience.

Remember that according to Ezekiel, God poured out His wrath on Israel because of Israelâ??s rebellion via their worship of idols. No idol worship = no rebellion. Further, it strains credulity to the breaking point that Israel would still be worshiping the Egyptian gods/demons/idols after the â??puny godâ?• beat-down that Yahweh delivered over the previous 9 plagues. Even further evidence is what we already saw, that Passover was an iconoclastic rejection of the Egyptian god (*demon*) Khnum.

Thus, as we saw earlier, Passover was literally Israel rejecting the Egyptian gods in favor of Yahweh.

Thatâ??s the very opposite of the rebellious idolatry that God accused Israel of in Ezekiel, and for which God poured out his wrath on Israel.

At the risk of being pedantic, let me repeat the case: We know that God decided to judge Israel because â??on the dayâ?• that God promised to bring them out of Egypt, they didnâ??t cast away their

idols, so God judged (â??poured out His wrath onâ??) them for that rebellion. We know that the ten plagues were judgement. We know that Israel suffered under the first three plagues, but none of the rest of them, including the 10th plague. Thus, why wouldnâ??t God pouring out His wrath on Israel in Egypt be during the first three plagues? (*Which then convinced them to stop being idolatrous, which is why they never suffered under another plague.*) Further, Exodus 12:28 tells us that Israel obeyed the instructions about Passover to the letter; therefore, you canâ??t say that they were judged on Passover because Ezekiel tells us that the judgement came because of rebellion and idolatry, neither of which Israel engaged in on Passover.

This is why you need to read the scripture carefully.

Itâ??s important.

Now, on the topic of reading carefully, Mike Winger suggests that the blood of the Passover lamb protected Israel from Godâ??s judgement. However, if you read the text carefully, thatâ??s not what the blood is stated to do.

Exodus 12:13

13â??The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

The blood was a sign.

Scripture explicitly tells us that it was a sign. Now, you might ask: â??A sign of what?â?? and thatâ??s a reasonable question, but I think we answered it above. Smearing the blood of a lamb on your doors was an affront to the Egyptian ram god Khnum and the entire Egyptian religious system, signifying that you rejected the Egyptian gods in favor of Yahweh.

Does the redemption of the firstborn support PSA?

Mike Winger makes another argument that the Passover supports PSA, and thatâ??s based on the redemption of the firstborn in Exodus 13. Before we look at the passage though, you need to know that Mike didnâ??t read the full context, including the last verse that says what the instruction is about. Iâ??ve included the extra context in the passage he quoted.

Exodus 13:1-2 & 11-16

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 â??Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me.â??

â?!

11 Now when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, **12** you shall devote to the LORD the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the LORD. **13** But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. **14** And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, What is this? then you shall say to him, With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. **15** It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD the males, the first offspring of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem. **16** So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.

Need I point out the obvious?

This only applies to males, not females.

Do women not need a savior? Because if you're going to take this as a picture of PSA, then that's the picture you need to draw. (Again, this is why you need to read a passage carefully.) The proper way to understand this is to read verses 1-2 which say sanctify, verse 12 which says devote, and verse 16 which says sign. We actually see this in 1 Samuel when Hannah gives/dedicates her firstborn son, Samuel, to God.

More importantly, God tells us why in verse 16: it's a sign. It's something to remember the event by.

The Hebrew word translated sign is אוֹת ([owth](#)), and the definition #5 from Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon is:

5 signs, memorials, stones from Jordan Joshua 4:6 (J); metal of censers Numbers 17:3 (P); Aaron's rod Numbers 17:25 (P); אֶבֶן זִכָּרוֹן Isaiah 55:13 probably also Ezekiel 14:8 (אֶבֶן זִכָּרוֹן); signs on hands, etc., Exodus 13:9,16 (J) = Deuteronomy 6:8; Deuteronomy 11:18, probably belong here; also memorial pillar in Egypt Isaiah 19:20.

The lexicon references Joshua 4:6, so we'll look at that for context, then we'll look at where it's used in our Exodus 13 passage in the same way.

Joshua 4:4-6

4 So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe; **5** and Joshua said to them, Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. **6** Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, What do these stones mean to you? then you shall say to them, Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off

before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. **So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever.**

This is the same as the command about the firstborn: it's about remembering what God did. The same is true in Exodus 13, which Mike Winger might have noticed if he'd read forward one verse and read the previous verses:

Exodus 13:8-9 & 16

8 You shall tell your son on that day, saying, It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt. **9** And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt.

!

16 So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.

Notice the parallelism; they are saying the same thing. The redeeming of the firstborn was a sign/memorial that was intended to keep the exodus in the minds of the Israelites.

This is why you not only need to read the text carefully, but you also need to read the context.

Unfortunately, Mike Winger failed to do both in this case. I'm not even saying that he does generally, but he certainly did here.

Additionally, Mike Winger makes a big deal in that video of the fact that God abhors human sacrifice and never wants a human sacrifice. That seems to cut against the core of PSA because in PSA, Jesus was exactly that: a human sacrifice to appease God's wrath.

Eating vs not eating and atonement

Another bit of evidence that Passover wasn't for atonement is that it was eaten by the people, while the people were never allowed to eat offerings for atonement (*actually purification*) in the Mosaic Law. Jesus is repeatedly called a sin offering (*actually a purification offering*) as we saw in [this article](#) in the New Testament, and most PSA supporters will agree that the sin purification offering is the one that Jesus typifies. **However, importantly, the people weren't allowed to eat the sin purification offering.**

Leviticus 6:24-26 & 29

24 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **25** Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering: in the place where the burnt offering is slain the sin offering shall be slain before the LORD; it is most holy. **26** The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. It shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting.

!

29 Every male among the priests may eat of it; it is most holy.

Thus:

- Common Hebrews couldn't eat the sin purification offering (*the one that Jesus is repeatedly called*)
- Common Hebrews were commanded to eat the Passover

Is this ironclad proof? No. However, it's worth considering.

Is there a connection between Passover and PSA?

I can find no element of the Passover that teaches PSA once you understand the context.

Without the context and without careful reading, I can see how someone could make that mistake. However, with the context and a careful reading, it becomes impossible. Honestly, just a careful reading of the passages and their scriptural context even without the context of the Egyptian god • (demon) Khnum makes it impossible.

Mike Winger is correct about one thing though: he says that the Passover and the Day of Atonement Purification are the two biggest elements of the Old Testament that point to Christ.

I agree.

- The Day of Atonement Purification was about cleansing from sin
- Passover was about freeing captives enslaved to the powers of darkness
- Jesus did both for us

We spent a lot of time in this PSA series going through the Old Testament sacrificial system, including a lot of time spent on the Day of Atonement Purification. Then in this article, we looked at the Passover in great detail. However, I personally see no clear support for PSA in either of them, nor even tangential support.

Final thoughts/addendum

I found far too many scriptures to use in this article. However, since they are all on topic, I thought I would copy/paste a few of them here because they are relevant, but I didn't want to include them in

the main body of the article.

1 John 3:7-8

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; **8 the one who practices sin is of the devil**; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. **The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.**

Obviously Jesus's death did more than one thing, and this verse makes it clear that destroying the works of the devil is one of them.

This next passage is part of Paul giving his testimony before a Roman official. Verse 18 will become important in a future article, and notice that verse 18 contains the five elements of the gospel that God Himself commissioned Paul to preach.

Acts 26:12-18

12 While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,

13 at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.

14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.

15 And I said, Who are You, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

16 But get up and stand on your feet; **for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness** not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; **17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,**

18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.

Notice the five elements of the Gospel:

1. To open eyes
2. To turn them from darkness to light (*sin to righteousness*)
3. To turn them from the dominion of Satan to [the dominion of] God (*What this article discussed*)
 - o The above was so that they could receive:

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4. The forgiveness of sins (*the Greek word there could mean other things; weâ??ll look at that in the next article*)
 5. The inheritance that belongs to all who have faith in Him

This is the gospel.

The gospel isnâ??t just one thing, itâ??s five things according to Godâ??s inspiration. Weâ??ll come back to that in a future article, but I wanted to mention it now.

The Harrowing of Hell

I mention this mostly for completion, since itâ??s less relevant and debated (*sometimes hotly*). Some believe that while Jesus was dead in the underworld before the resurrection, that He preached to the righteous dead and then led them into heaven either before His resurrection or right after His ascension. This is based mostly on Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:8-9

8 Therefore it says,
 â??WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH,
 HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES,
 AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.â??

9 (Now this *expression*, â??He ascended,â?? what does it mean except that **He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?**

The idea is that the â??captivesâ?? were righteous dead men who could now be resurrected, and/or be brought to heaven because Jesus had finished His work for our salvation. This is also referenced in the â??Apostleâ??s Creedâ??, in the phrase â??descended into hellâ??, though â??hellâ?? is a poor translation because it simply refers to the place of the dead, not a place of punishment for the wicked.

Anyway, I wonâ??t spend any more time on this because itâ??s quite tangential to PSA as a whole, and only slightly related to the topic of the article. However, I felt I would be remiss if I didnâ??t at least mention it.

A note about witchcraft/sorcery in the Bible

The Bible regularly prohibits sorcery, witchcraft, and things of that nature. I suspect â?? I canâ??t prove, but suspect â?? thatâ??s because in order to get access to supernatural power apart from God, you need to go to another supernatural being who isnâ??t God. i.e., the â??godsâ?? (*demons*). We saw above how itâ??s extremely likely that demons do have some limited amount of supernatural power.

Thus, ultimately, there are only two places to get supernatural power: God and demons. That's it. There are no other sources of supernatural power. That means if you aren't getting it from God, you're getting it from demons. At the risk of sounding obvious, demons do not have your best interest at heart. I'm sure this is part of the reason that God forbade Israel from learning such things.

I mention this because there's a growing Christian witchcraft movement that thinks you can serve both Jesus and use witchcraft.

You can't.

The reason you can't is besides the fact that it's blatant rebellion is because the power source for witchcraft is demons. No man can serve two masters. This is why when sorcerers converted to Christianity in Acts, they burned all their books. (Acts 19:19). Anyway, I thought I should mention this given the topic of this article.

The Lion, The Witch, and the Victorious Christ

In C.S. Lewis's classic tale *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Edmund betrays his brother and sisters. By doing so, he unwittingly places himself under the authority of the villain, the White Witch. As she says to Aslan:

You know that every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have a right to kill. And so that human creature is mine. His life is forfeit to me. His blood is my property unless I have blood as the Law says all Narnia will be overturned and perish in fire and water.

Because of the law of Narnia, Edmund belonged to the White Witch. To free Edmund from that law and the White Witch's dominion, Aslan (*the Jesus figure*) lets the White Witch kill him. However, by killing him, the White Witch's power is greatly reduced. Aslan then goes and breathes life into the Narnian citizens that she had turned to stone, bringing them to life again. Then there's a final battle where Aslan himself kills the White Witch.

Sound familiar?

C.S. Lewis knew his Bible extremely well, and thus he made the focus of the story Aslan's victory over the powers of darkness to free Narnia. That's this part of the gospel in a nutshell: Jesus freeing us from the powers of darkness. (Notably, it was the enemy who killed Aslan and demanded death, not the Emperor across the sea, who is analogous to God the Father in Narnia. No PSA there.)

And since we're already talking about fiction:

Men want to slay a dragon: How about the great dragon, that serpent of old who deceives the nations?

A proper understanding of spiritual warfare includes every Christian being a soldier in the Kingdom of God and doing battle against the forces of darkness to free the world.

God is the general, we are the soldiers, military mechanics, drill instructors, etc. that God uses. He knows what He's doing. If His entire army simply listened to their general, the victory would be swift and incredible. The early church believed this and turned the world upside down.

Further, they believed that they could hasten the coming of the day of God according to 2 Peter 3:12. (*Which we'll look at in a future article.*) They believed they had a world to rescue under God's direction, and also believed that doing so would hasten the coming of God, and thus the New Heavens and New Earth where we'll live in glorified bodies without sin, pain, or death.

I don't know about you, but that's pretty motivating for me.

Conclusion & Overview

We started by seeing that there is such a thing as demonic hierarchy, including at least demonic kings, princes, and lower-level demons. We further saw that these demons had dominion over geographic areas like Persia, Greece, Ekron, etc. We then saw that Satan is the god of this world, that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, and that unbelievers have been captured by him to do his will. Effectively, Satan and his demons have enslaved the whole world. (*Believers excepted because Jesus freed us from this.*)

We examined the possibility that Satan at least partially got his authority from Adam, because by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved, and man was overcome by Satan's temptation into sin. Thus, Satan seems to control us through sin similar to how a drug dealer controls an addict through drugs.

We then examined the possibility that Satan's authority was given to him by God, since the whole world was handed over to him. This led us to the sons of God as another name for angelic beings (*fallen or not*). Though, we saw that the Son of God is Jesus and God Himself. Then we saw how the sons of God (angels and/or demons) sinned.

Then we looked at the Hebrew word *elohiyim*, which is usually translated *God* or *gods*, and refers to any spiritual being, which can include angels and demons. This led us to God's *Divine Council*. **That in turn led us to Deuteronomy 32:7-9, and we saw how at the Tower of Babel, God disinherited the nations, giving legitimate authority and dominion of them to the sons of God, or fallen angels/demons that wanted worship, and man wanted to worship (seemingly) anything other than the One True God, Yahweh Almighty, the Creator of all things.**

But God wasn't done. He picked Abraham and eventually his descendants ended up in Egypt. God orchestrated the Exodus from Egypt and the Ten Plagues to break Israel of their idolatry, but more importantly, to get the *puny gods* (*demons*) of Egypt to release their claim on Israel. It worked, and Yahweh then had one nation not under the legitimate control of the demons. **We looked at Passover and saw that it was an iconoclastic statement that Israel was going to serve Yahweh, and not the Egyptian gods (*demons*).**

We then saw how the rest of the Old Testament was Yahweh and Israel versus the pagan gods (*demons*) and the nations they controlled as the gods/nations tried to destroy Israel to prevent their prophesied defeat.

They obviously failed.

Jesus came/incarnated, provoked the demons to cause His own death, and then proclaimed his victory â?? Christus Victor â?? over the powers of darkness. He tricked them into defeating themselves, then publicly humiliated them, and disarmed them, removing their primary weapon of death.

Almost more importantly from our perspective, Jesus â??blots outâ? Satanâ??s claim on anyone who trusts in Jesus, using the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as a superior claim than the one Satan has. Sadly, this doesnâ??t affect unbelievers. **We then saw that evangelism is spiritual warfare**, taking back Godâ??s rightful â??territoryâ? (us) from the enemy.

We looked at whether Passover supports PSA and saw that when you read the relevant texts carefully and consider the context, thereâ??s no reason to think it does.

Wow. 34k words.

The next article will be on if Jesusâ??s death was necessary for the forgiveness of sins. It might seem obvious based on Matthew 26:28, which reads: â??for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.â? However, the Greek word does have other nuances of meaning, and God did forgive others before the cross. Based on preliminary research â?? which is always subject to rapid change â?? PSA has a legitimate understanding, but not the only legitimate understanding.

Anyway, thatâ??ll be the next article in this series, and Iâ??ll see you all there.

EDIT: That article has been published, and you can read it here: [PSA Series â?? Did Jesus Have to Die for God to Forgive Sins?](#)

God Bless,

Berean Patriot