

Psalm 82 Ascension Day 2025

Introduction

You may be wondering how the Scripture readings selected for this evening's service connect to the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. My aim is to draw out several important and illuminating threads from the Bible to help you see why Christ's ascension is not a footnote, but the very climax of the story of redemption.

The ascension reveals to us the glory that God has prepared for His people from before the foundation of the world—a glory the New Testament calls our *inheritance* and our *heritage*. This inheritance is bound up with our adoption as *sons of God* through Jesus Christ.

Now, in the Old Testament, the phrase *sons of God* refers to heavenly beings—what we commonly call “angels.” Some of these angelic sons of God have been given governing authority by the Most High to oversee particular regions or nations on His behalf. These spiritual rulers are referred to in Daniel as “princes,” and their realms of authority as “principalities.”

Paul seems to most comfortable describing them with terms like *rulers, thrones, authorities, powers, and dominions*.

Divine Council

The heavenly sons of God, which are sometimes just called 'gods,' or "holy ones" are members of God's Divine Council. And we see this distinction in Psalm 82:1:

*¹God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgement:*

Ps. 89:6-7 says:

⁶For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD?

Who among the sons of God is like the LORD,

*⁷a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones,
and awesome above all who are around him?*

Now perhaps you have never been introduced to this concept. But it is right here in the Bible. The divine council is a heavenly assembly of spiritual beings (often called elohim, "gods," or benay elohim, "sons of God") who serve under the authority of the Most High God (Yahweh). These beings are divine and spiritual entities created by God to assist Him in governing the heavens and the earth.

In other words, the LORD has a royal court, complete with counselors. Not that the Lord of Hosts needs to seek counsel from anyone, but He delights to incorporate His creation into His providential plans and government of the

heavens and earth. And so he does with these gods, with these sons of God.

We actually have a snap shot in Scripture of a divine council meeting in 1 Kings 22. The Prophet Micaiah has been summoned by king Ahab of Israel and Jehosaphat of Judah to determine if they should go to war against Syria. All the false prophets of Ahab kept telling him to do so. But King Jehoshaphat called upon Michaiah to inquire of the LORD. And after he told him that Israel would be defeated in battle, Ahab complained that Michaiah never prophesies good concerning him.

¹⁹ And Micaiah said, “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, ‘Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said one thing, and another said another. ²¹ Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, ‘I will entice him.’ ²² And the LORD said to him, ‘By what means?’ And he said, ‘I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And he said, ‘You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.’ 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.”

This is a picture of the Divine Council in action.

The Divine Council actually sets the backdrop for everything that happens in Job's story.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. ⁷The Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." ⁸And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job...?"

So the Bible refers to these heavenly beings as “sons of God,” or sometimes just as “gods”, and they serve as God’s Divine Council.

Divine Guardians

Besides giving God council, one of the other original purposes of the angelic sons of God was to assist humanity in growing into spiritual maturity, ultimately fulfilling our God-given role as rulers over heaven and earth with God.

Psalm 8 reflects the destiny of our original calling:

*What is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
(elohim – “gods,” or “angels” – LXX),
and crowned him with glory and honor.*

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet. (Ps. 8:4-6)

God made man “a little lower” than the gods, yet destined him for dominion over all creation. As Hebrews 2:8 explains, “*In putting everything in subjection to him, He left nothing outside his control.*” This includes even the angels—the heavenly sons of God—who were originally tasked with overseeing and guiding humanity toward maturity.

Though for a time these celestial beings ruled over us as guardians, the divine intention was always that humanity, once matured, would surpass them in glory. Our inheritance was to rule not only the earth, but also the spiritual realm alongside God.

Paul explains this in Galatians in terms of what it means to be an heir:

“*The heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything. But he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world.*” (Gal. 4:1-3)

In our spiritual infancy, we were placed under the guardianship of heavenly beings—entrusted with guiding us until the time appointed by our Father, when we would

come into full inheritance: crowned with glory and honor, ruling over all things, including the angels (cf. 1 Cor. 6:3).

This was the plan from the beginning. But God's plan is what provoked the rebellion of the devil. The devil was originally created to serve as a *throne guardian*—a heavenly seraphim or cherubim placed in the garden sanctuary to instruct Adam in the fear of the Lord, to teach him how to worship, and to lead him to glory, to lead him to become like God.

But pride entered his heart. Rather than shepherding man to glory, the devil grew envious of man's destiny to become more glorious than himself, and his honor to rule even over him. Unwilling, therefore, to prepare a throne for one formed from dust, he sought instead to destroy him. And not content with rebellion, he attempted to usurp the very throne of God for himself saying:

*"I will ascend to heaven;
above the stars of God
I will set my throne on high;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
in the far reaches of the north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High."* (Isa. 14:13-14)

Through this cosmic treason, the devil led others of the heavenly host into rebellion. What was once a unified *Divine Council* became divided. Some heavenly sons remained loyal to the LORD; others did not. From that point forward, the spiritual realm was marked by conflict, as rebellious powers sought to thwart the divine plan for man's glorification.

The Flood and the Tower: Rebellion in Two Acts

The next phase of the rebellion of the sons of God is recorded in **Genesis 6**, just before the flood. There, we are told that these heavenly beings sinned grievously: they abandoned their proper domain, took mortal women as wives, and fathered a race of hybrid giants known as the **Nephilim**. These were “*the mighty men of old, men of renown*”—literally, “*men of the name*.”

As this corruption spread, humanity plunged deeper into wickedness. The earth was filled with violence, and so God sent the flood to cleanse the world and reset creation.

After the flood, Noah's descendants obeyed God's command to “be fruitful and multiply.” Genesis 10 records the Table of Nations—seventy peoples descended from Noah's sons, representing the renewed world. Yet among them, one name stands apart: **Nimrod**.

He is described as “a mighty man,” echoing the language used of the **Nephilim** in Genesis 6. Like them, he represents the rise of a proud and violent power. Nimrod established his kingdom in **Shinar**—the very land where the **Tower of Babel** was built. There, the people declared, “*Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves.*” Their ambition mirrored the Devil’s own: to ascend to heaven and become like the Most High. And in seeking to “make a name,” they echoed the Nephilim—“the men of the name.”

This city and tower was no mere architectural feat. It was a unified act of rebellion: an attempt to storm heaven, claim divine glory, and place counterfeit glorified man of the corrupted union of the sons of God with the daughters of men on the throne. The tower was a counterfeit mountain of God—a monument to human pride and a hub of idolatrous ambition.

But God answered this rebellion not merely by scattering the nations, which I will talk about in a moment. He answered it ultimately in **His Son**.

The virgin birth of Christ and the mystery of the **hypostatic union**—that Christ is truly God and truly Man—stand as God’s holy answer to the profane imitation of the Nephilim. While the fallen sons of God left their proper

place and defiled women to produce hybrid tyrants, men of the name, Christ, the eternal Son, left His throne in Heaven to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He did not exalt Himself, but humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant. He was obedient unto death—even death on a cross.

Therefore, God exalted Him. He did not build a tower to Heaven—**He became the Tower to Heaven**. And so God gave Him the Name above every name, so that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:8–10).

But before the incarnation of the Son of God, God answered the problem the tower of Babel by dividing the nations.

God said, “*Let us go down and confuse their language.*” Who is the “us”? I believe it refers to the Divine Council—the heavenly sons of God who had not yet rebelled.

Nations Disinherited

At Babel, the Lord did more than confuse language. He divided humanity into nations and disinherited them from Himself. In judgment, He assigned each nation to the

oversight of one of His heavenly sons, entrusting them with limited rule. As **Deuteronomy 32:8–9** explains:

*When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
when He divided mankind,
He fixed the borders of the peoples
according to the number of the sons of God.
But the Lord's portion is His people,
Jacob His allotted heritage.*

The LORD gave the nations over to the rule of heavenly beings—but *He reserved Israel for Himself*.

This idea of God giving the earth to be governed by the gods isn't limited to the Bible. Even **Plato**, in his dialogue *Critias*, preserves a memory of this reality:

“In the days of old, the gods had the whole earth distributed among them by allotment... they peopled their own districts, and tended us, their nurslings and possessions, as shepherds tend their flocks... guiding us by persuasion... Now different gods had their allotments in different places which they set in order.”

Plato's myth closely mirrors the biblical truth: the nations were assigned to different spiritual rulers. But while they were meant to shepherd and guide, many of these beings **abused their authority**, accepting worship and drawing

men into idolatry. In doing so, they betrayed their heavenly mandate.

The Warning to Israel

Israel was not to follow the nations in worshiping these lesser gods. Moses warned them clearly:

Beware lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and moon and stars—all the host of heaven—you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. But the Lord has taken you... to be a people of His own inheritance. (Deut. 4:19–20)

The “host of heaven”—sun, moon, and stars—symbolize these spiritual rulers. In Job, God calls the sons of God “morning stars.” So when the nations bowed to the stars, they weren’t just engaging in primitive superstition—they were worshiping the lesser gods assigned over them.

But Israel’s calling was different. They were the LORD’s inheritance. To worship these other beings was to abandon their covenant with the true God, and to invite judgment. And when they are judged...

²⁴ all the nations will say, ‘Why has the Lord done thus to this land? What caused the heat of this great anger?’ ²⁵ Then people

will say, ‘It is because they abandoned 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 and went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them. Deuteronomy 29:24-26

Psalm 82 and the Ascension of Christ

In Psalm 82, we are given another glimpse of the divine council in session. God takes His place at the head of the assembly and brings judgment upon the angelic rulers, the “sons of God,” who were charged with stewarding the nations, but instead have corrupted mankind and ruled wickedly, leading them into ignorance and darkness.

¹ God has taken His place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods He holds judgment:

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

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;
⁇ nevertheless, like men you shall die,
and fall like any prince.”
⁈ Arise, O God, judge the earth;
for You shall inherit all the nations!*

The divine council is condemned. These sons of God—meant to shepherd the nations into righteousness—have instead led them into chaos and darkness. They are judged as corrupt, and their doom is sealed: “*Like men you shall die.*” Jesus later makes clear that the eternal fire has been *prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. 25:41). And this is the destiny that awaits them for their rebellion.

The Ascension

But what does Psalm 82 and the Divine Council have to do with the Ascension of Christ?

Everything.

Psalm 82 ends with a pronouncement of judgment and hope:

*“Arise, O God, judge the earth;
for You shall inherit all the nations.”*

The “gods” have failed. The sons of God have squandered their authority. So the Most High sends *another* Son—His only begotten Son—to take their place, to inherit the nations they corrupted, and to bring righteousness where they brought ruin.

Daniel 7 and Psalm 2 tell of another Divine Council Meeting, this time the conversation is between the God the Father and God the Son.

Daniel 7 set the scene of Jesus’ Ascension into Heaven.

*“I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.”*

And Psalm 2 gives us a portion of that conversation, when the Father speaks to His Son saying:

*“You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.
Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.”*

At His ascension, Jesus Christ—having conquered death—was glorified and exalted to the right hand of God, enthroned above every spiritual ruler, power, throne, dominion, and principality. The corrupt members of the Divine Council have been disinherited from their place in God’s family, and their inheritance over the nations is also stripped from them, and given to the Only Begotten Son of God.

And now, because Christ has taken possession of the nations, we also have entered into our inheritance, for He has made us *heirs* with Him by faith.

Galatians 4:4-7

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our

hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”

Michael Heiser summarized it well:

“The Church is the reconstituted divine-human family of God. The believers’ destiny is to become what Adam and Eve were meant to be—immortal, glorified imagers of God, living in God’s presence as His children.”

As Paul prays in Col. 1, “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the **inheritance of the saints (holy ones) in light.**¹³

The designation of saints should be understood also as ‘holy ones’ which is a term used of the members of God’s divine council.

*He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the **kingdom** of his beloved Son,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Paul echoes this idea in **Ephesians 1** when he prays again... that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints (in his holy ones)... and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the

dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

This is not abstract theology, People of God. The Ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven, is the heart and pinnacle of your salvation. The Lord Jesus inherited the nations of the world to be His. He took us back to Himself from the corrupt sons of God. And now by faith in Christ, we are adopted sons of God, destined to displace the fallen heavenly rulers. As Paul boldly writes, “*Do you not know that we are to judge angels?*” (1 Cor. 6:3)

The great reversal has begun. The sons of God who once ruled unrighteously are cast down. Christ is risen. Christ is ascended. Christ is enthroned. And we, the Church, are now the sons of God, filled with His Spirit, are destined to rule and reign with Christ.

But our greatest inheritance is not land, the nations, the earth, or power, or position. Our greatest inheritance is **God Himself**. Christ gives us His Spirit so that we might become like Him—partakers of the divine nature, glorious, holy, and incorruptible.

The angelic sons failed in their task to lead a revolt against Heaven to make a name for themselves. But Christ has been exalted and receive a name above all names, and so leads mankind into righteousness and glory. The Son of God has succeeded, where the sons of God have failed. And now, through Him, God is bringing *many sons to glory* (Heb. 2:10), among whom you all are included, so long as you continue to put your trust in Him.