

ABLE TO STAND

PART 2: *The Cosmic Topography of
Spiritual Warfare*

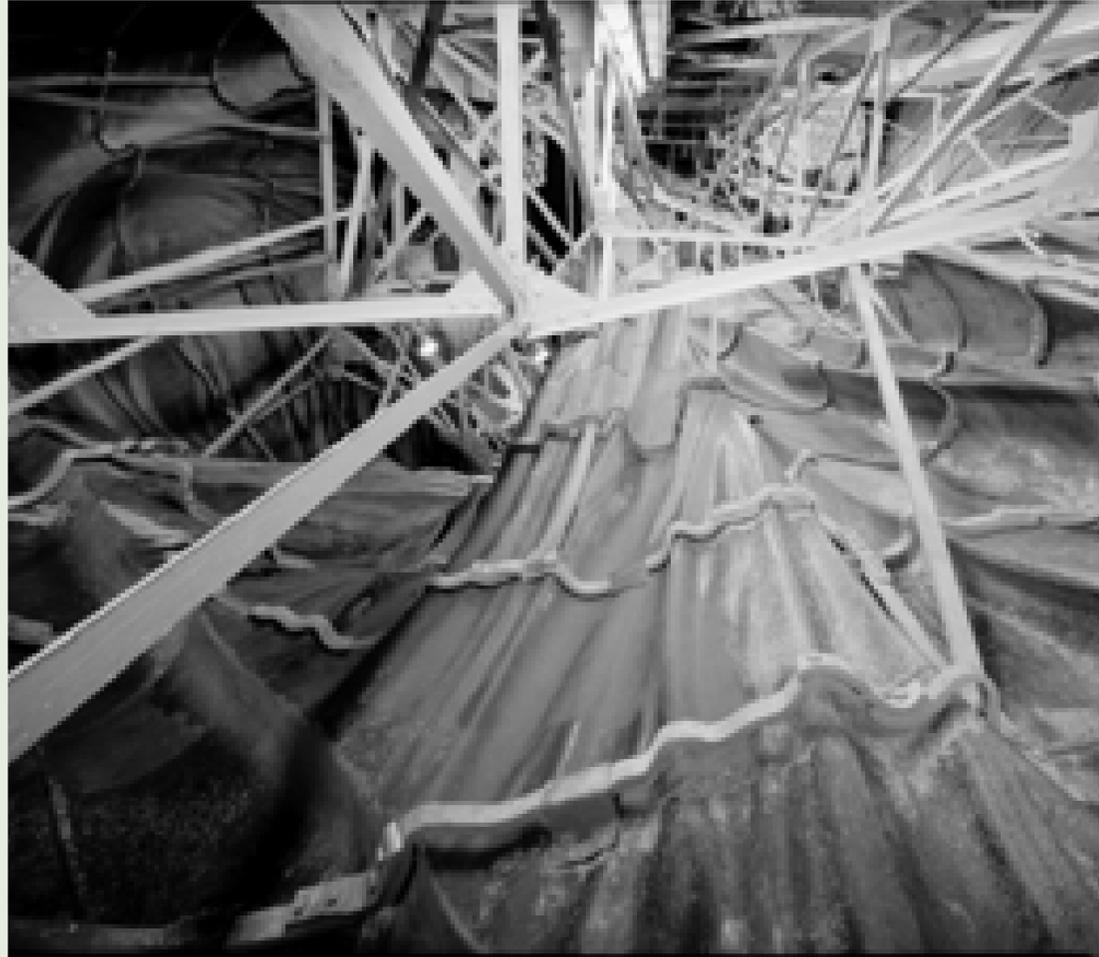
BY KERRI WEEMS



“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.”

Ephesians 6:12 (CSB)

This is a famous peice of art. Can you guess which one it is?*



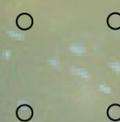
*Photos public domain from the Librabry of Congress



Armature: a metal framework upon which a sculpture is molded with clay or similar material.

The armature doesn't look like the sculpture to the eyes of the observer, but in actuality the sculpture is the 3D projection of the armature.

Ephesians 6:12, like a sculpture, rests upon the armature of Paul's understanding of the origin and structure of the world, or his cosmology.



PAUL'S COSMOLOGY

*Understanding the Battlefield of
Ephesians 6:12*



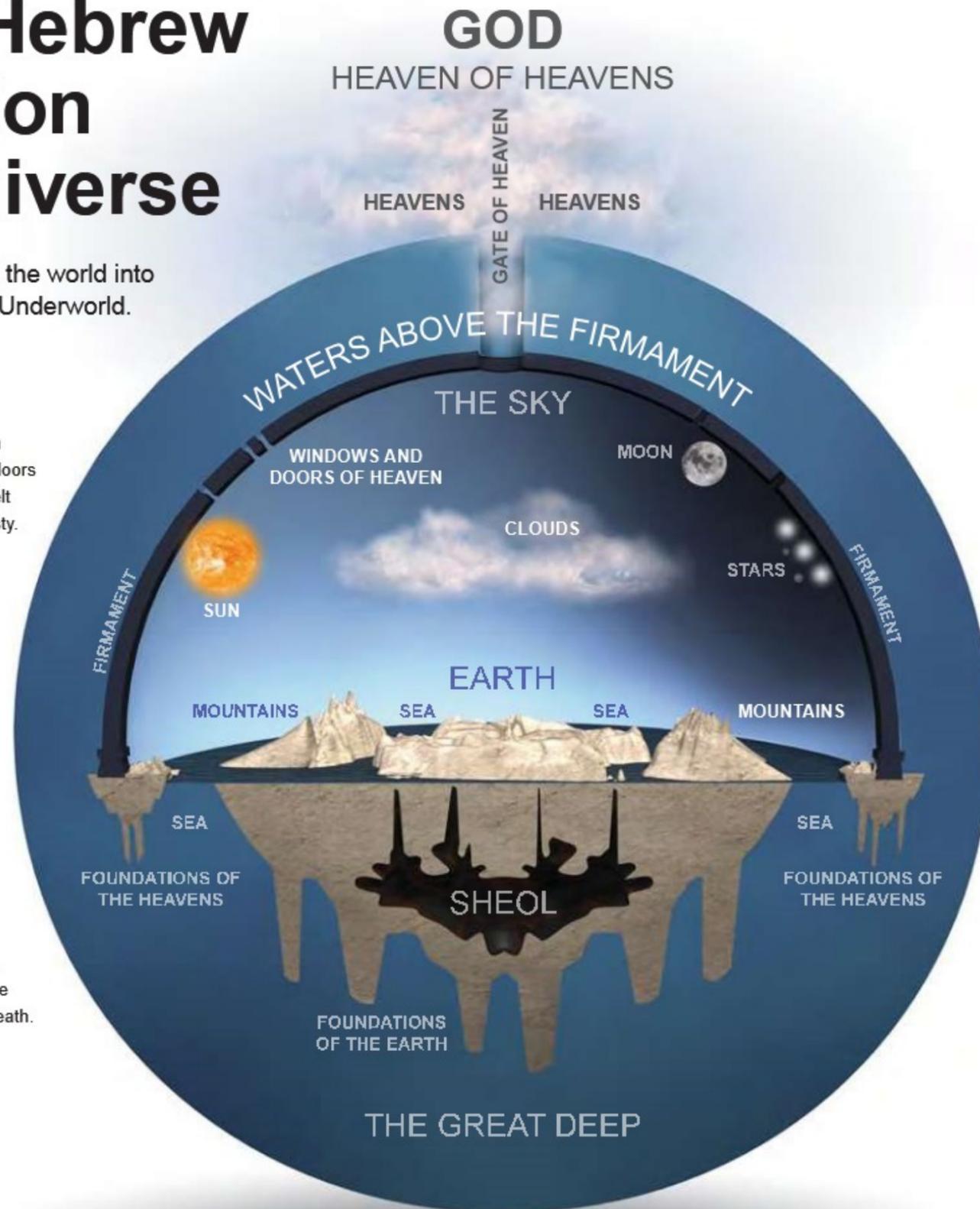
Ancient Hebrew Conception of the Universe

The ancient Israelites divided the world into Heaven, Earth, Sea, and the Underworld.

They viewed the sky as a vault resting on foundations—perhaps mountains—with doors and windows that let in the rain. God dwelt above the sky, hidden in cloud and majesty.

The world was viewed as a disk floating on the waters, secured or moored by pillars. The earth was the only known domain—the realm beyond it was considered unknowable.

The Underworld (Sheol) was a watery or dusty prison from which no one returned. Regarded as a physical place beneath the earth, it could be reached only through death.



Paul's cosmology was almost certainly consistent with ancient Hebrew cosmology.

Hebrew cosmology was almost identical to Ancient Near-Eastern cosmology.

The cosmology of the Greeks and Romans were not significantly different from that of the ANE.

The most important difference between ancient Hebrew cosmology and the others is in the Hebrew origin story, found in Genesis 1-11.

COSMIC CREATED ORDER

YHWH
King of the
Universe

← Separate from creation
God's throne room
in the third heaven

God and the other elohim can
come down to the mountain garden,
but humans do not go up to the heavens

**The Second Heaven--
Domain of the elohim**

← Not God's throne room



Waters of the firmament

Visible sky



The Mountain Garden is the designated place
where heaven and earth can interact

EARTH IS THE DOMAIN OF THE HUMANS

COSMIC
CREATED ORDER
POST REBELLION

YHWH
King of the
Universe

The Second Heaven--
Domain of the elohim



VEIL OF SEPERATION



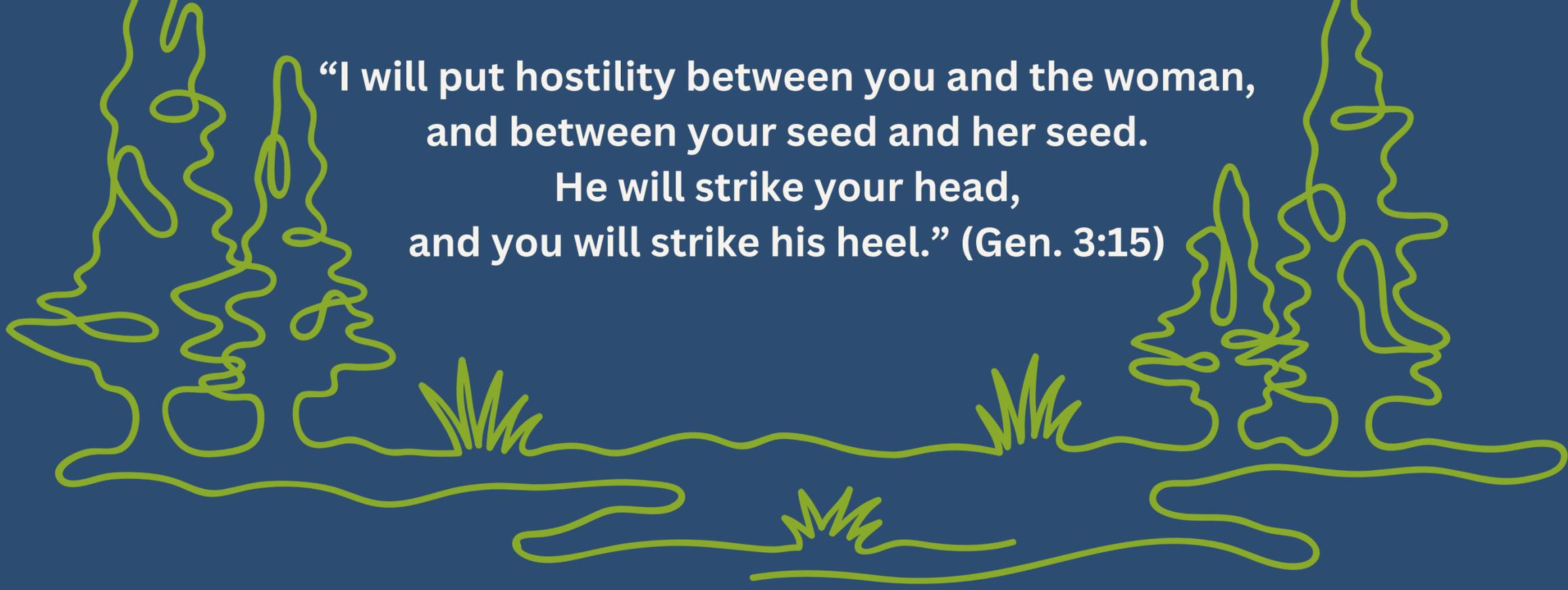
Cherubim are placed at the
gates of the overlap;
human can no longer enter.



THEME: DISTINCTION



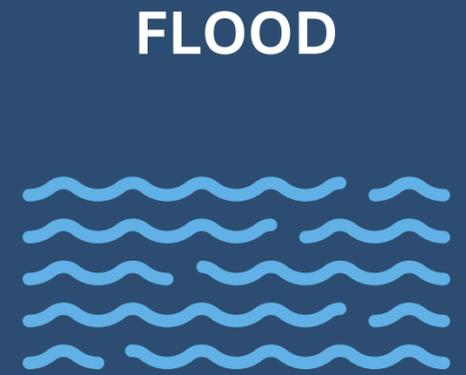
**“I will put hostility between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed.
He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.” (Gen. 3:15)**



EVE

Cain

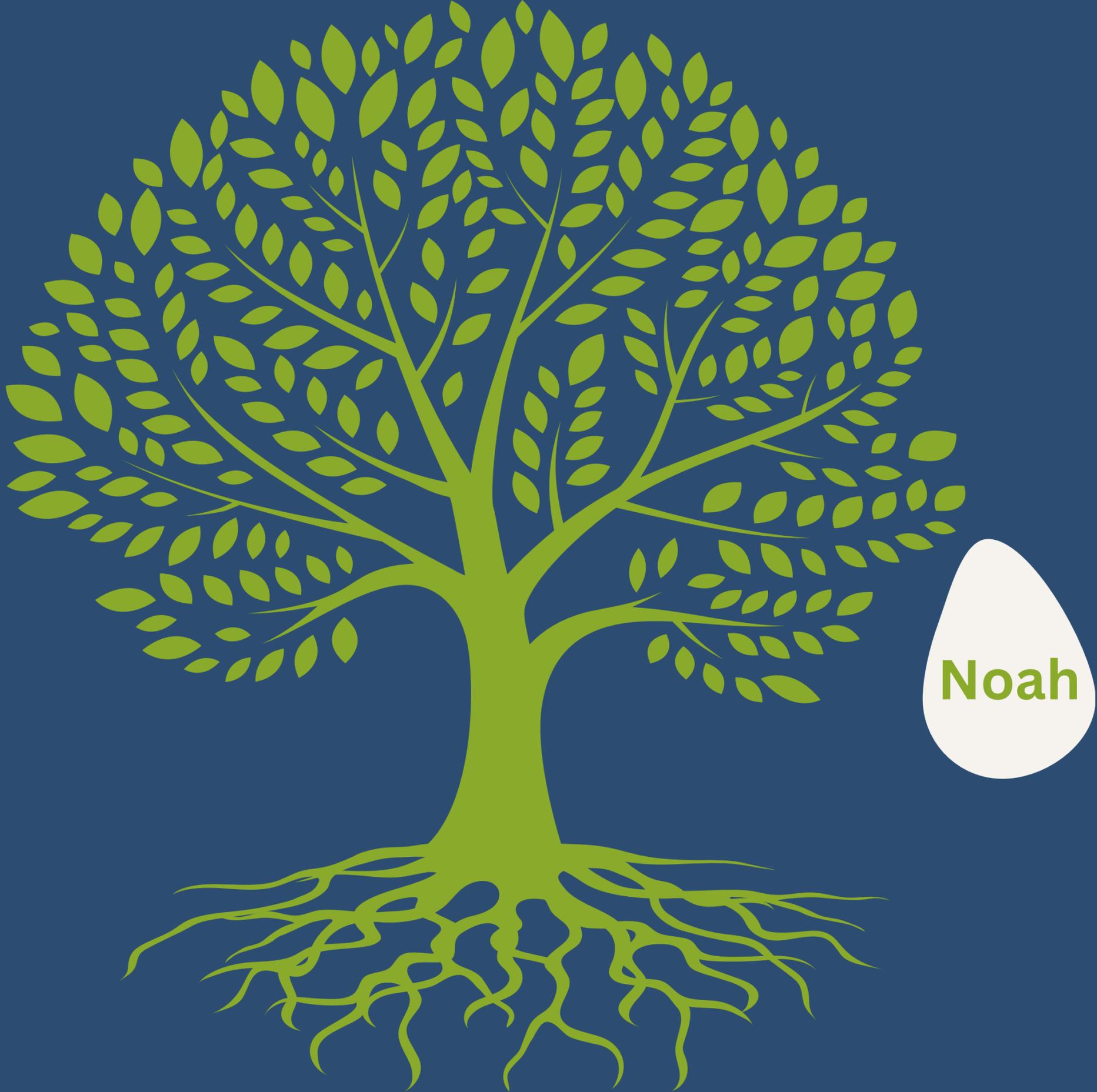
Nephilim



Noah

Seth

Noah



Noah



Shem

Abram



Ham

Nimrod

The Third Rebellion

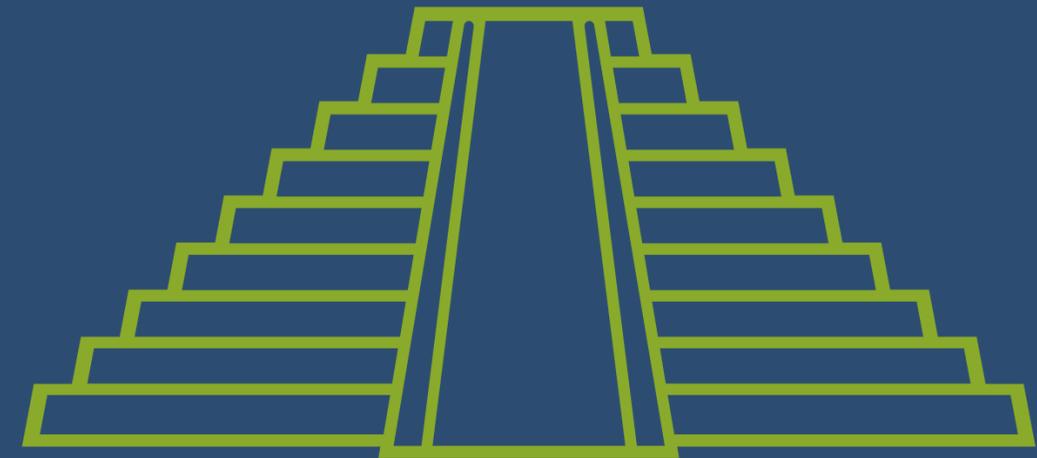
Genesis 11:4–9 (ESV)

And they said, “Come, let’s build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let’s make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth.”

5 Then the Lord came down to look over the city and the tower that the humans were building. 6 The Lord said, “If they have begun to do this as one people all having the same language, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let’s go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another’s speech.” 8 So from there the Lord scattered them throughout the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 Therefore it is called Babel [Heb. Gate of the gods; Heb. *bālal* “he confuses”]

for there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the Lord scattered them throughout the earth.

The Gate of the Gods



- Ziggurat: Large religious structures that took the form of a stepped pyramid
- Nearly every culture on earth has something similar to a Ziggurat in their religious history and ancient archeology.
- Nearly every culture on earth has a creation story in which star beings descended and created their people
- Nearly every culture on earth has a catastrophic flood in its origin story.

God chose a PORTION of the earth; a place where His presence would dwell amongst His covenant people. His people would take up the commission YHWH gave to Adam and Eve, and establish a new outpost of new Eden.

Deut. 32:7–9 (ESV)

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.**

Psalm 82 (ESV)

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? 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 (*bene elohim*),
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!

Jacob's Ladder

Genesis 28:10-17 (ESV)

10 Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11 And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. 12 **And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!** 13 **And behold, the Lord stood above it** and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. 14 Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." 16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." 17 And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Jesus is the Gate

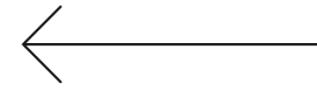
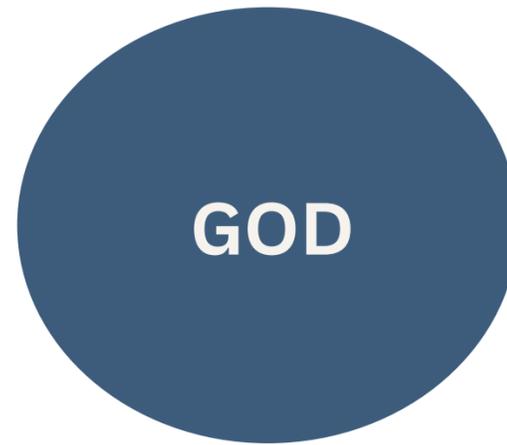
John 1:51 (ESV)

And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God **ascending and descending** on the Son of Man.”

John 14:6 (ESV)

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

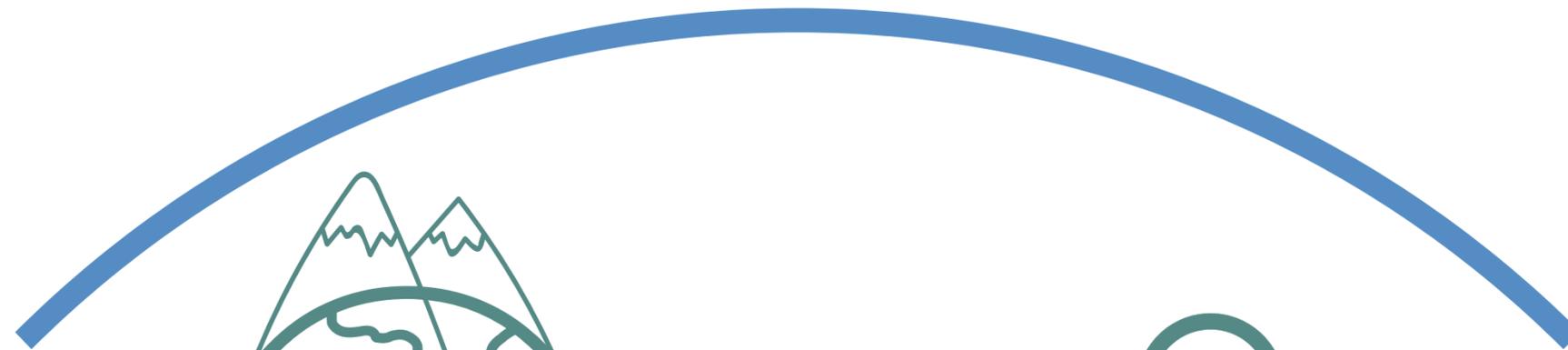
JESUS OPENS THE
WAY TO THE
HEAVENLY PLACE



**Jesus sits at the right hand of
the Father (Mark 16:19; Eph.
1:20)**

**We are seated in heavenly places
with Christ (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1)**

**The Second Heaven is the battle zone
where cosmic conflict plays out**



**We ourselves are
the mountain
garden; our bodies
are the places
where heaven and
earth overlap. The
Church is the
community in
which His rule and
reign are
demonstrated.**

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.”

Ephesians 6:12 (CSB)



Third Heaven (Throne of God; Paradise)

- 1.3 “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (ἐπουράνιος) in Christ”
- 1.20-21 “seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places (ἐπουράνιος)”
- 2.5-7 “seated us with Him in the heavenly places (ἐπουράνιος) in Christ Jesus”

Second Heaven (Spiritual Forces)

- 3.9-10 “to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places (ἐπουράνιος)”
- 6.10-12 “against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (ἐπουράνιος)”

First Heaven (Material Cosmos)

- 1.10 “things in the heavens (οὐρανός) and things on the earth (γῆς)”
- 3.14-16 “every family in heaven (οὐρανός) and on earth (γῆς)”
- 4.9-10 “descended into the lower parts of the earth (γῆς)? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens (οὐρανός)”

The chart Cosmology of Paul in Ephesians includes English biblical text and an illustration depicting the cosmology:

1. First Heaven (Material Cosmos) – Eph 1.10; 3.14-16; 4.9-10
2. Second Heaven (Battle Zone with Spiritual Forces) – Eph 3.9-10; 6.10-12
3. Third Heaven (Throne of God; Paradise) – Eph 1.3; 1.20-21; 2.5-7

Highlights:

- Referring to the Second and Third Heavens, Paul consistently uses the phrase “in the heavenlies” (cf. Greek; with prefixed preposition).
- Referring to the First Heaven, the material cosmos, Paul consistently uses “heaven(s)” (without prefixed preposition) in conjunction with “earth.”

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- Paul's words about spiritual warfare, like a 3-D sculpture, are a projection of his underlying cosmological framework.
- Paul's cosmological framework is the reference point for his meaning and intention in the texts we so often quote.
- The concepts of order, protocol, domain permeate In Paul's cosmological framework and that has an impact on his exhortations about spiritual warfare and his assumptions about how they should be applied.
- We, as God's covenant people, must engage in spiritual warfare and avoid trespassing into the territory of spiritualism of any form. This requires discernment and restraint.
- Like every faithful priest, each of us must take seriously our duty to maintain order as we guard and keep watch at the boundary of heaven and earth.
- We don't have to share Paul's cosmology to understand and apply the spiritual principles in his exhortations.

