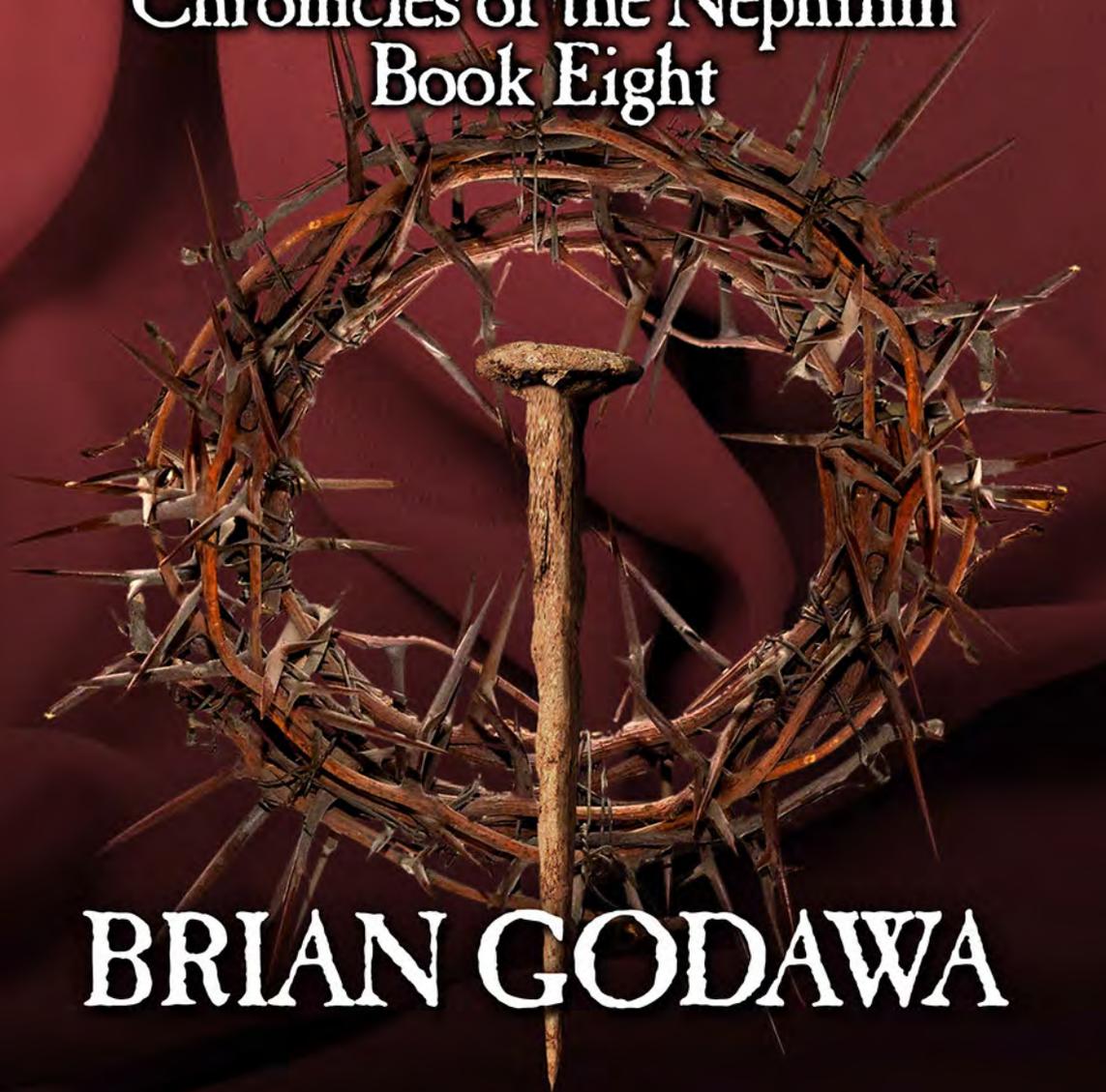


JESUS TRIUMPHANT

Chronicles of the Nephilim
Book Eight



BRIAN GODAWA

Jesus Triumphant

Chronicles of the Nephilim

Book Eight

By Brian Godawa

JESUS TRIUMPHANT

1st Edition

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Chronicles of the Nephilim

Noah Primeval
Enoch Primordial
Gilgamesh Immortal
Abraham Allegiant
Joshua Valiant
Caleb Vigilant
David Ascendant
Jesus Triumphant
Jerusalem Judgment

Chronicles of the Nephilim For Young Adults

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*When Giants Were Upon the Earth:
The Watchers, Nephilim, & the Biblical Cosmic War of the Seed*

For more information and products by the author:

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Dedicated to the apostates
Of the Jesus Seminar, and the Jesus Project,
and to
True believers whose imagination
is in need of resurrection.

This is spiritual war.

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NOTE TO THE READER

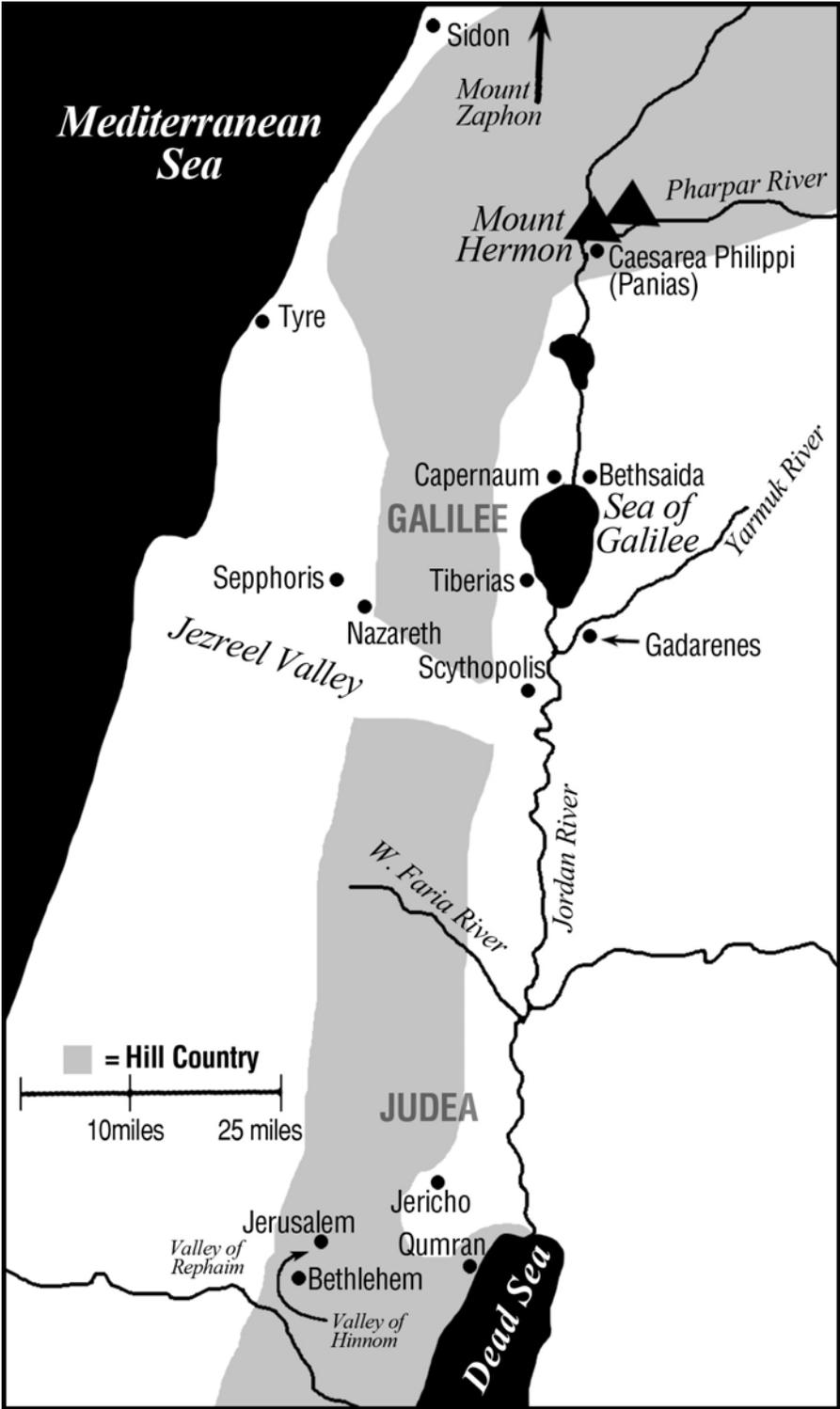
Jesus Triumphant is the eighth in the series of novels, *Chronicles of the Nephilim* about the Biblical Cosmic War of the Seed. Though it can be read as a standalone novel, there are characters, motifs, storyline histories and themes that have been carried over from previous novels in the series. Therefore, the true depth and riches of the story can be best appreciated and understood in that context.

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Daniel 2:44-45, 35

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

1 Peter 3:18–22



PROLOGUE

Tohu wabohu. Formless and void. The desert of Azazel was the haunt of jackals, the habitation of *siyyim* and *iyyim* demons, Lilith the night hag and her serpent Ningishzida. Here the night creatures howled, the centaurs dwelt, and the satyr goat demons danced upon the ruins of desolation. Chaos and disorder.

But it was not night, it was day. The demons seemed held at bay, their whisperings carried only by the winds.

Jesus bar Joseph stumbled on the rocky wasteland. His staff kept him shakily on his feet as he leaned on it for support. His hood barely shielded him from the scorching bright sun high above. The howling winds felt like waves of heat from a blacksmith's furnace. His sandaled feet pained at each step with sunburnt exposure. His lips were parched, cracked and bleeding.

Water. He craved water. He had a headache, a backache, his entire body ached. He had been fasting for over thirty days now, he couldn't remember exactly how many. He had lost track. Dizziness finally brought him to the ground, his knees stinging on the gravelly desert floor.

"Had enough?" The whisper penetrated him with a sweet malice.

He ingested dust from a gust of wind and coughed. It stuck in his dry throat and he suffered a coughing fit that made the burning even worse.

When he had finally calmed down, his blurred and watery eyes looked up at the being before him: At almost six feet tall, cloaked in a desert robe that could not hide the gaunt figure beneath. Deliberately androgynous with long flowing hair. A disturbed blending of male and female characteristics. Make-up accented serpentine eyes that melded beauty and malevolence. This being was confusion and chaos incarnate. It stared down at him with cool contempt.

"Nachash," croaked Jesus. It was the name of that ancient tempter in the Garden, the first of many names through the ages; Accuser, Mastema, Sammael, Diablos, Helel ben Shachar, the Serpent.

"I am going by Belial these days. It has a nice ring to it." *Belial* meant the personification of wickedness, treachery and rebellion.

Jesus' throat hurt to speak. "I see you are disguising yourself in more humble appearance these days. Afraid of something?"

“The jester from Galilee. I am impressed you can maintain your wits after so many days in my little home away from home.” Belial spread his hands out, gesturing to the dry deadly expanse around them. “I will admit that the advance of civilization has made it somewhat disadvantageous for the Watchers to reveal our true nature or presence. Yes, we are working more behind the veil than we did in primeval days. On the other hand, the way things are going, I can foresee an age when humanity has turned religion into pretty fictions, and blinded themselves to our reality. Imagine the influence we will then have on ignorant fools who no longer believe in us.”

In the days of Jared, before Noah, two hundred Sons of God had rebelled against the Creator, Yahweh Elohim. They left their habitation of a multitude of heavenly host that surrounded the throne of Yahweh. They came to earth at the cosmic mountain called Hermon in the northern reaches of Canaan. They were the Watchers who masqueraded openly as the gods of the earth. At eight feet tall with serpentine skin of beryl and bronze that would shine with emotion, they earned the additional name of Shining Ones.

But as the primeval past faded into memory, mankind’s knowledge expanded and its hubris grew with the promise of the Serpent that humans would become as gods. The Watchers became less obvious with passing time, as they sought to work more behind the veil of the supernatural world. As divine beings, Watchers could exert hypnotic effect on humans to see them in any appearance they desired. Thus, the eight-foot tall shining Belial made himself appear to be a mere five-foot ten being, both male and female, neither male nor female, a dissolution of gender, an abomination in the Law of God. But to Belial, such intolerant condemnation would not stop him from looking good. Unlike the ordinary, quite uncomely human before him, Belial still wanted to stand out from the crowd. He reveled in abomination.

Belial said, “Let us stop wasting time, Nazarene. I know who you are. I saw the entire circus show in the desert. The dreadfully smelly and theatrical Baptizer, the Holy Spirit descending like a vulture, Yahweh blathering from heaven, blah, blah, blah.”

Jesus drifted off in his memory to a mere month ago, where he had been baptized in the Jordan River not too far from this hellish wasteland. John the Baptizer had left the communal sect of Qumran by the Dead Sea to become a lone voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way for Messiah’s advent. He was baptizing people in preparation for that arrival. But when he saw Jesus, he protested that he was not worthy to tie the thong of Jesus’s sandal, and that it should be Jesus who baptized John instead.

Jesus Triumphant

Jesus could remember the precious look on John's face. A mixture of revelation and confusion, like he doubted what he had been proclaiming might actually be coming true. Jesus had chuckled and thought of dunking John in the water as a playful prank, but thought better of it because of the seriousness of the moment.

Baptism was a serious sacrament indeed. It was a symbolic ritual that recapitulated the cleansing waters of the Great Deluge. In the days of Noah, the fallen Sons of God had not merely come to earth to draw worship away from Yahweh. They also sought to corrupt humanity by violating the holy separation between heaven and earth. They mated with human women who gave birth to unholy hybrids of human and angel. These offspring were giants called Nephilim, and they were mighty warriors of old. The angelic/human crossbreeding had a second purpose: to corrupt the bloodline of the Messiah that was promised through the fully human bloodline of Eve. In the curse on the Serpent of the Garden. Yahweh had said, "I will put war between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head, and you shall strike his heel." The violent sins of men and angels brought the judgment of Yahweh to cleanse the earth from abomination. But it was only the beginning of a war that would not cease until the promised Messiah came to crush the Serpent's head.

Baptism was recruitment into that supernatural holy war that reiterated the waters of the Flood cleansing unholiness and evil from the individual's life, in preparation for a new messianic world. But in the case of Jesus, it was much more. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit had come upon him, which was foretold by Isaiah the prophet, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, my Chosen One, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations."

Yahweh the Father then spoke the words from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Those words were an allusion to a well-known messianic psalm of David where Yahweh spoke to the coming King.

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

But justice and inheritance were not merely a passive receiving of land rights. It was a hostile takeover from inhabitants that would not give up

without a fight. The second part of that prophecy did not bode well for the powers of the earth.

*You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”
Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
Serve Yahweh with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.*

But that was not the only Scripture of such ominous foreboding.

And the faithful were not the only ones privy to the prophecy. Even from the earliest of ages, the heavenly principalities and powers used the Seed of the Serpent to hunt down the Chosen Ones in each generation to try to kill them. Enoch, Noah, Abraham and others were protected by Yahweh from this murderous plan. The oracles of the pagan diviner Balaam and others foretold a divine star coming from the line of Jacob, a kingly scepter from Israel, a lion from Judah who would crush the skulls of the enemy and dispossess his inheritance.

Snapping fingers and a voice brought the delirious Jesus back to the moment. “Jesus. Hello, Jesus. Stay focused now. Look at me.”

Jesus looked at the creature. He wanted to gag as much from the ugliness of evil as from his spasming shrunken stomach.

Belial sniffed long and deep and said, “Just smell that. It’s heavenly.”

Jesus’s senses came alive with the sweet warm smell of freshly baked bread. His stomach cried out ferociously.

Belial’s words were sing song seductive. “Well, look what we have here. I believe it is exactly the stone ground wheat bread your own mother, that blessed Virgin, used to bake for you.”

Jesus was still on his knees. He looked over to see a loaf of steaming hot bread, fresh from the oven, sitting on a group of rocks not three feet from him. It had been pulled apart ready to eat. He could see the flakey crust, some of it floating away in the damnable breeze. Steam rose from the soft light brown interior. It took everything in Jesus’s soul to keep from reaching out and stuffing his mouth with the tempting sustenance of life.

Jesus Triumphant

But it was not real. Belial was not a creator, he was a mimic and a master of illusion. He could manipulate the senses to create just about any hallucination with which humans could deceive themselves by.

“If you are the Son of the God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. I want a worthy adversary, not a sickly weakling.”

Jesus had the power to do so. He had after all provided manna for the children of Israel. That was true heavenly bread, the food of angels. And he had provided water out of a rock to satisfy the thirst of thousands of Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness. He could taste that sweet cool refreshing water right now in his memory. He had gone so very long in his fast already. Perhaps it was time to feed himself and get to work with his plan.

No. He had to finish what he started here. He replied to Belial, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

The mirage of bread faded away.

“Oh, aren’t you a holy self-righteous Torah-thumping zealot. You think you are the only one who knows the Scriptures by heart?” Belial spit out in Jesus’s native Hebrew, “‘The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.’” He paused venomously. “I know what you are doing. It’s all so pathetically typological. And over the heads of common Israelites I might add.” Typology was Yahweh’s technique of repeating spiritual truth through repeating patterns in the Scriptural story he was unfolding in history.

“Yahweh is obsessed with his Exodus as if it is the only miracle ever accomplished in history. Now, you are setting yourself up as a new Moses to deliver the Israelites out of my worldwide empire of Rome.”

Belial was evil, but he was not stupid. Jesus sat up on the ground to listen. He pulled his hood down and placed his staff at his feet.

Belial continued, “Yahweh has sought to hide his plan from me since the beginning of creation. But then, like an idiot, he writes his little hints all over his Scriptures, that he leaves out in the open for any angel or *elohim* to read—and he thinks I am too ignorant to figure out the narrative.”

Jesus listened expectantly. He was patient, even with such condescending bluster.

“When Yahweh created the heavens and earth, the land was a desert of chaos, *tohu wabohu*, formless and void. Just like Moses was in the desert wilderness with Israel, and you are in the wilderness of Azazel right now. And all that desert chaos is what Yahweh seeks to push back to create his covenant order. Am I right so far?”

Jesus gave a slight nod of approval. Not bad. But there was so much more to it than that. Moses had wandered forty years in the desert for Yahweh to prepare him for the exodus, Israel wandered forty years in the desert before she could enter her Promised Land of the covenant. And now Jesus had fasted for forty days in the desert in symbolic unity of preparation for his entry as king of the new exodus of Yahweh's people out of their latest slavery under the new Egypt.

Belial continued his rant, "Yahweh pushed back the sea and crushed the heads of Leviathan in order to establish his covenant with Moses and Israel, which was the creation of order out of chaos. Then he pushed back the waters of the Jordan for Joshua's armies to cross and slay the Anakim giants of Canaan. It's that mythical thing of gods conquering the sea and river to establish their new world order, or should I say tyranny? So I gather you have yet to conquer your body of water. What will it be, drink up the Dead Sea? That will leave you thirstier than when you started, you know. With all that salt leftover from Yahweh's childish temper tantrum over Sodom and Gomorrah."

Jesus managed a slight smile at Belial's accusations. There was always a certain silliness to the self-righteous blame-shifting of evil. But his lips cracked open with pain, reminding Jesus of his purpose here. Belial could see it and was delighted with the slightest of suffering in his nemesis.

He continued, "Oh, and let us not forget the whole Son of David motif. That one is a real hoot. And I quote, 'I will raise up your seed after you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. My steadfast love will not depart from him. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.'" He had quoted it with exaggeration to make it sound ridiculous. He concluded. "Can it *be* any more obvious?"

Jesus shrugged. Maybe, maybe not.

"No, wait, yes it can. I do believe it can. How about this one,

Yahweh says to Adonai, my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand,

until I make your enemies your footstool."

Yahweh sends forth from Zion

your mighty scepter.

Rule in the midst of your enemies!

Yahweh has sworn

and will not change his mind,

Jesus Triumphant

*“You are a priest forever
after the order of Melchizedek.”*

Jesus finally spoke up. “You had better be careful, Accuser, quoting so much Scripture may have a deleterious effect on your accusations.”

“Well, well, ‘the Messiah’ has a second wind. Nice to see you listening, starved attention though it may be. May I complete the narrative?”

Jesus gestured with his hand to continue.

“So, King David, that vanquisher of giants, and Seed of the Serpent, takes down the Philistine champion Goliath. He enters Jerusalem in a triumphal procession with the head of his giant foe, and proceeds to wipe out the last of the Rephaim giants in the land. Now, I wonder what city the ‘Son of David’ is going to enter in triumph to claim his universal kingship? Why, Jerusalem of course, where he will claim the holy temple and demand eternal priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. And there you have it. The Messiah as prophet, priest and king. But why wait? Let us go there right now.”

The wind whipped up around Jesus. Sand got in his eyes. He closed them tight and stood up from the ground. When he opened his eyes, he found himself standing at the pinnacle of the holy temple in Jerusalem with Belial beside him smiling. Beneath this roof, the holy of holies resided, where the cherubim images guarded the ark of the covenant, the very royal throne and footstool of Yahweh Elohim on earth. And that throne room was a shadow, a mirror of reality of Yahweh’s true throne room in the heavens above the waters. Thus, the saying, “On earth as it is in heaven.”

It was a good sixty feet drop to the bottom of this temple. He could see the priests going about their daily sacrifices in the court below. Beyond, in the women’s courtyard and in the outer court of the Gentiles, Jews were milling about engaging in temple duties, completely unaware of these two observers peering down from the golden trimmed roof.

Belial’s previous sarcasm turned smooth and testy. “Prove now you are worthy of your Scriptural claims. If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ Or are you not God’s new Melchizedek?”

His sarcasm carried particular venom when he mocked Jesus’s phrase, “it is written.”

Jesus swallowed and replied, “On the other hand, it is also written, ‘You shall not put Yahweh your god to the test.’”

Belial scoffed, “Oh, how petty.”

Another gust of wind blew from below. Jesus's cloak flew up and obscured his vision. When it came down, he saw he was on the precipice of a deep ridge back in the desert. Had he ever left?

The gust of desert wind suddenly went still. Jesus found it difficult to breathe in the stifling deadness of the heat. Was he dizzy from the height or from his malnutrition? Now, he heard whispering voices of malignant evil all around him. The cacophony was enough to make a human go insane. But Jesus was no mere human.

Belial said, "My children. My minions. No, the Nephilim are not gone from the land. They are still here. And they will rise up."

The unholy Nephilim had been purged from the land, first by the Flood, and finally through the holy wars of Canaan by Joshua ben Nun and King David. There was only one thing Belial could mean by their return.

Belial changed the subject. "Yahweh has protected his chosen seedline of Messiah through all the ages. I must say however, that I am not impressed with his choice of a final vessel. You have neither the constitution nor the military skills of your namesake, Joshua." Joshua was Hebrew for Jesus. "Now there was a ballsy warrior. I hated that godlicker and his tail-wagging dog, Caleb.

"But you, you are but a simple carpenter. Pshaw! I fail to see how you will fulfill his conquest. The only thing you have going for you is the Covering. Apparently, the heavenly principalities and powers cannot touch you." Belial paused. The bodiless demonic horde faded back into the howling desert rocks. A subtle smirk grew on Belial's lips. "But the earthly humans over which we rule *can*."

He let that one linger with a sense of foreboding. Belial was good at delivery. He was after all the Accuser in the very courtroom of Yahweh's divine council. He challenged the Laws of Torah and prosecuted heavenly lawsuits against Yahweh's people.

"I almost had you in the hands of Herod when you were born. How you escaped Herod's slaughter of the innocents at Bethlehem, now that I must congratulate Yahweh on. The whole flight to Egypt and all. And there you have it, that exodus connection again. Just like Moses escaping the slaughter of Hebrew infants by Pharaoh. Nice touch. If it had not been for those Babylonian Magi literally coming and pointing out the star prophecy to Herod, that rock head would never have figured anything out."

The star prophecy that Belial alluded to had a long history of importance. When Yahweh had originally created the heavens and earth, he placed the constellations of stars and planets in the sky not merely for

Jesus Triumphant

seasons but for signs to mankind. And the most imaginative sign was the story of redemption that he embedded within the very structure of the twelve constellations that revolved around the earth. The narrative was of a virgin (Virgo) who would bear the promised seed and pay the price of justice (Libra) to overcome the “wounder of the heel” (Scorpio). This promised one would be a conqueror (Sagittarius the archer), who would be the scapegoat of atonement (Capricorn), and bring living waters for his people (Aquarius the water-bearer). Those people would be blessed though bound (Pisces the fish). Their blessings would be consummated through a ram of sacrifice (Aries) who would become a ruling leader (Taurus the bull), a king with two natures (Gemini the twins). He would hold his people fast in his grip (Cancer the crab), and would ultimately reign as king over the earth (Leo the lion).

Yahweh’s enemies eventually subverted the original intent of the constellations and twisted the entire system into a form of idolatry that worshipped the stars instead of Yahweh as the determiner of destinies.

The Babylonian Magi, whose tradition was influenced by the teachings of the exilic prophet Daniel, had followed the final sign in the heavens that pointed to the birth of Messiah. It was written that when the constellation Virgo was on the horizon, clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, with twelve stars above her head, she would give birth to a divine king. This was because the king planet Jupiter aligned in conjunction with the king star Regulus over her head creating a bright star. The Magi observed that sign in the year 750 AUC, seven hundred and fifty years from the founding of the city of Rome. The star Regulus is in the constellation of Leo the Lion.

The Magi were taught by their Hebrew prophet that this King of the Jews would be called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And they were taught he would come from the small town of Bethlehem in Judea. Unfortunately, the second part of the sign was the constellation of Hydra, the red dragon, whose tail was just under Virgo’s feet and entailed a third of the horizon line called the elliptic. This prefigured the Serpent and his fallen ones seeking to devour the Messiah at birth.

Warned by Gabriel, the Magi never returned to Herod and Jesus’s parents escaped to Egypt until after Herod died. By the time Herod, that son of a serpent, murdered all the young male children of Bethlehem, Jesus was already gone.

Jesus knew that Herodian mass murder was a mere portent of the battle he had in his future. And this monster before him was the heavenly architect of his earthly opposition. Jesus swayed in his stance. He reached down and with a grunt picked up his staff to hold himself up.

But when he arose, he now found himself on the peak of a mountain range, the tallest in the region. It was cold and snowy. The wind, no longer hot, but bitterly cold, rushed into his folds and chilled him to the bone. He pulled his cloak tighter and raised his hood.

Belial stepped up beside him. "It is so much colder without food in your belly. Here, let me help you. He took off his cloak and draped it around Jesus. "There, there. Are you warmer?"

Jesus said nothing. But he did not refuse the cloak. He shivered and felt his toes already going numb. Belial stood unfazed by the freezing winds despite his bare skeletal chest.

"Do you know where you are?" asked Belial.

"Mount Hermon," said Jesus.

"Very good," he condescended. "Believe it or not, I did not bring you here to freeze your little toesies. But rather to share my change of heart from my mount on high."

Mount Hermon was the original cosmic mountain of the gods. The original location of the Watchers' descent. At the Flood, most of the two hundred rebel gods had been bound into the earth and imprisoned in Tartarus by the archangels to await the Judgment. Seventy of them and their minions escaped the catastrophe and used this original site of their falling to earth as their sacred headquarters of rebellion against Yahweh. They even organized themselves into a pagan imitation of Yahweh's own divine council of heavenly host, several of them vying for chief position as the most high.

Deep within the bowels of Hermon was a cavernous hall of assembly where the seventy met in counsel to deliberate their plans and administer their own twisted form of justice upon the earth. A lake of pitch black infernal waters in the cavern led to the Abyss that connected to the mouth of Sheol, or Abode of the Dead, called *Hades* in Greek. Thus Hermon was a holy mountain that connected the three tiers of the cosmos: the heavens, the earth and the underworld.

Jesus was standing on the high place of the stronghold of supernatural evil next to the Prince of the Power of the Air.

Belial swiped his hand and the clouds appeared to part, enabling Jesus the ability to see all the known world below and their cities of men. Belial's contempt melted into a seductive whisper in Jesus's ear. "Do you see all these kingdoms and their glory? They have been delivered to me, and I give them to whom I will."

Though he was the Father of Lies, in this, he told the truth. After the Flood, the Great Nimrod of Babel had unified all the world under his

sovereign authority. He built a ziggurat tower, a sacred cosmic mountain to the heavens where humanity sought divinity in their godless unity to storm heaven. But Yahweh divided their tongues and spread them upon the earth as seventy nations. Because of the incorrigible evil of men's idolatry, Yahweh allotted each of the nations and their territories under the authority of the seventy Sons of God, as their inheritance. They would worship the rebellious heavenly host.

But Yahweh saved the sons of Israel for himself, through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and claimed the land of Canaan for their inheritance. The only problem was that Canaan was already under the dominion of Ba'al, Asherah and other gods. And Canaan was the land of giants, the Seed of the Serpent. Joshua ben Nun and David ben Jesse had cleansed the land of its unclean inhabitants with the Wars of Yahweh. But Israel's constant adultery with the gods of Canaan lost them their inheritance, and over the years, they were chastised by one nation after another. Assyria, Babylonia, Media-Persia, Greece, and now Rome.

Over a millennia, Belial had built up the small Latin republic in the west that ultimately became an empire. As the heavenly Prince of Rome, Belial's ownership eventually dominated the entire world as Rome conquered all under her power. Since earthly powers and heavenly powers were linked in their spiritual reality, Belial was the chief archon, the god of this world. He parceled out land and power to the other gods out of his own bounty and rule.

Belial whispered, "All of this power and glory is mine. All of it. Caesar is my puppet, his governors are my whores, and his undefeated military machine is my right arm of power. You stand no chance against me, Messiah."

Jesus shivered with more than cold. This serpent had become monstrous in his power and no less insidious in his intentions since the Garden. He had been preparing for the ultimate War of the Seed for millennia, and he was ready for a fight.

But then Belial changed his tone. "And yet, I have an offer of shalom between us." Shalom was the Hebrew word for peace, a peace that was not mere cessation of hostilities, but was true enduring wholeness and unity. Jesus looked up into his eyes.

"All of this, all the kingdoms of the earth and their authority, I will give to you as a peace offering. Is that not what Yahweh has promised you?"

It was Yahweh's promise that the Messiah Seed of Abraham would bless all the nations and inherit the earth. But this is precisely why Belial's

offer was completely out of character. Why would he conquer nations and fight for eons of time to gain control of the whole world, only to hand it over to his arch nemesis? There had to be fine print in this covenant offer.

Belial continued with the sincerity of a politician. “You will have your earthly inheritance without all the death and destruction and bloodshed of the Day of the Lord.” And then he spilled the barley. “All I ask is one teeny tiny thing in return. All you have to do is fall down and worship me.”

Jesus looked Belial in his eyes, deep dark pools of malevolence. He whispered back, “Be gone, Accuser. For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”

Belial sighed and said, “Fine, have it your way. But just let it be written, I gave you the chance to avoid Armageddon and you blew it.” He grabbed his cloak off of Jesus and swung it around in an arc, creating a whirlwind of snow that blinded Jesus for a moment in its swirling white coldness.

Jesus found himself in the desert again. But now he was alone. Belial was gone. But his haunting words of warning lingered longer than the cold in his extremities as the desert heat overtook him again. “Armageddon” was a word that meant a climactic battle for the “mount of assembly,” the very seat of divine power in the heavens. Hermon was the mount of assembly for the gods of the earth. Zion was the mount of assembly for Yahweh in Jerusalem. Belial had used the term to express the clash of kingdoms that was coming between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdoms of earth. A clash of cosmic mountains. The prophet Ezekiel called it the Battle of Gog and Magog.

Jesus knew that right now, Belial was most likely already informing his divine council in Hermon of their exchange. The gods were already preparing for war. Belial’s words echoed in his memory: “The heavenly principalities and powers cannot touch you. But the earthly humans over which we rule *can*.” Though they had no authority to touch Yahweh’s anointed, they might do so through their human vessels.

Jesus trembled with the weight of responsibility that now overwhelmed him. But the pain was lessened when he heard the familiar sound of his favorite angel echo in his mind.

Jesus, be strong and courageous.

“Jesus, be strong and courageous.” It wasn’t in his mind, it was being spoken to him from behind.

“Sound familiar?”

Jesus turned. He looked up into the smiling face of Uriel the smallest of three angels now standing before him.

Jesus Triumphant

Uriel finished his thought, “The words you spoke to Joshua at the threshold of the Promised Land. Funny how it all comes full circle.”

Gabriel, the second angel, and Uriel’s constant bickering companion, responded, “Uriel, I think your humor is once again in incredibly poor taste considering his suffering. Where is your compassion?”

“Nonsense,” said Uriel. “Jesus has done it. Victory is a cause for celebration, not sadness. He made it forty days without food, which is more than I can say for you, chubby.” Uriel patted Gabriel’s stomach. Gabriel moved away annoyed at the jab. Sure, he was heavier than the lightweight Uriel, but he certainly didn’t see himself as “chubby.”

Mikael, the largest and best groomed of the three, was the guardian prince of Israel, and tended to be protective of his ward. He offered a wineskin to Jesus, who took it and gulped with gratitude.

After a moment of silence, Jesus wiped his beard of the wine and said, “You need a better sense of humor, Gabriel.”

Gabriel pouted with frustration at being ganged up on. Uriel, his perpetual nemesis was one thing. But being teased by the Master was quite another.

Jesus said, “And Uriel, you had better deliver on that bread you promised.”

Uriel smiled again and held out a loaf of Mary’s best bread. “Baked two hours ago by your mother.” Jesus grabbed it.

Mikael said, “Remember, do not eat too quickly. It is bad for your digestion after fasting.”

“Thank you for your ministering spirits,” said Jesus, and took a big hungry bite out of the loaf.

Uriel muttered, “Your mother should open a bakery. Can I have a bite?”

Mikael was not so lighthearted. He knew that the challenge had been declared. The road to war had begun.