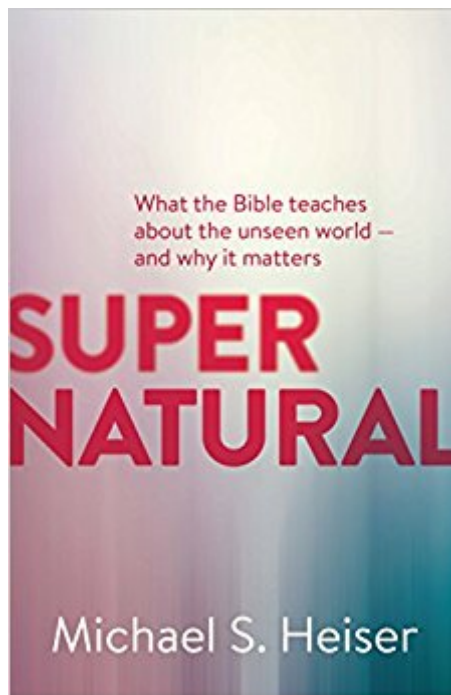




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Supernatural: What The Bible Teaches About The Unseen World – And Why It Matters



Synopsis

Dr. Michael S. Heiser, a Scholar-in-Residence at Faithlife Corporation, presents fifteen years of research on what the Bible really says about the unseen world of the supernatural—unfiltered by tradition or by theological presuppositions. “People shouldn’t be protected from the Bible,” Dr. Michael S. Heiser says, but theological systems often do just that, by “explaining away” difficult or troublesome passages of Scripture because their literal meaning doesn’t fit into our tidy systems. Who were the “sons of God”? Who were the Nephilim? Where do angels fit into the supernatural hierarchy? Why did God find it necessary to have the Israelites destroy the populations of entire cities—man, woman, and child? What relation does Jesus bear to the rest of the supernatural world? Dr. Michael S. Heiser tackles these questions and many more in his books *Supernatural* and *The Unseen Realm*. In both books, Dr. Michael S. Heiser shines a light on the supernatural world—not a new light, but rather the same light the original, ancient readers and writers of Scripture would have seen it in. After reading these books, you won’t be able to read the Bible in the same way again. *Supernatural*, *What the Bible Teaches about the Unseen World* and *Why it Matters* presents this approach to reading and understanding scripture for the person in the pew. *The Unseen Realm* covers the same material but at a deeper, complex, and highly documented way, for pastors, the seminarian, or serious students of the Bible.

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Customer Reviews

We can't believe what we don't understand. In Supernatural, Michael Heiser helps us to do both. It may open your eyes to the scripture in a new way. --John Ortberg Author of *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*

A scholar in the fields of biblical studies and the ancient Near East, Dr. Michael S. Heiser is the Scholar-in-Residence at Faithlife Corporation, the makers of Logos Bible Software. Dr. Michael S. Heiser studied at Dallas Theological Seminary, has an MA in Ancient History from the University of Pennsylvania and, an MA in Hebrew Studies and a PhD in Hebrew Bible and Semitic Languages from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has published widely in scholarly journals and popular periodicals such as Bible Study Magazine. Dr. Michael S. Heiser has taught at the college level for 12 years. He specializes in the Hebrew Bible, Northwest Semitic languages (biblical Hebrew, Biblical Greek, Syriac, Aramaic, Ugaritic, Egyptian, Akkadian, Sumerian, Phoenician, and Moabite), biblical theology, the history and religions of the ancient Near East, and Second Temple Jewish literature.

I have been through Dr. Heiser's internet related programs, his website (www.drmshe.com), podcasts, etc. Read four of his books so far and have enjoyed all of them. Supernatural is the most recent. I am writing this for two different groups of people; first, the average person in the pew and then second for the scholarly type. First: Supernatural was written for the average person who is not into all of the academic talk. Dr. Heiser was able to simplify this "heavy subject" so that more people could participate in the conversation. My wife and three daughters could follow the subject matter and also thoroughly enjoyed it as well. Second: For those who want the academic side, that will definitely come out in the scholarly version of Supernatural which is titled The Unseen Realm. I am very much looking forward to The Unseen Realm because that is the type of material that I have been used to consuming from Dr. Heiser. However, for you scholarly types, please don't overlook the easy to read and less complicated Supernatural. I read it and was pleased because I knew that I could give Supernatural to family and friends as a great introduction to the subject of the divine council, cosmic geography, etc. As I have come to find out through Dr. Heiser's additional teachings, the divine council is a biblical subject that literally touches/affects nearly every biblical doctrine in the scripture. Don't believe me, read Supernatural as an introduction and then The Unseen Realm when it comes out in the next several months and find out. This subject is important enough

for everyone to read, not just the scholar/academic. Supernatural accomplishes that goal. Enjoyed Supernatural and I am very much looking forward to The Unseen Realm.

We know of the Bible as the story of God's plan of salvation for mankind. From the first page to the last, we see that he had the end in mind from the very beginning. However, most of the time we see just two parties to the story: the Triune God and mankind, those inhabitants of the third heaven and the first. However, there is another group that plays the role, the divine council. Part of the group referenced in Ephesians 6:12 which refers to the unseen realm ruled by principalities, two of which are named in a brief reference in Daniel 9. There are a few explicit references to these beings in the Bible along with many references that are implicit. Without understanding that yes, there is an actual unseen realm and a variety of beings who inhabit it and that some of the words spoken in the Bible are judgments against them, we can completely miss the context of what certain passages are saying. Dr. Michael Heiser has made an extensive study of the Divine Council. An expert in ancient Near East languages, he has collected over 4,800 references related to it. This 168 page book is a synthesis of those resources and gives an overview of the structure and dynamics of the conflict from Genesis to Revelation. The book reminds me of "Mere Christianity." But while Lewis began at square one beginning with a defense that there must be a God and then follows with arguments as to why the Christian God rings true in every area, this book is written for a Christian audience. Heiser assumes that the reader believes in God and that Christ is the Redeemer of mankind; however, be prepared to check every other assumption you have regarding the make-up of the heavens at the door. I'll admit, when I first came across his blog, drmsb.com, and read about the Divine Council, it was uncomfortable. It didn't fit with what I had been taught in Sunday School, Bible study or church. But having that information, when I read through the Bible, there were passages that opened up to me. There was significance where before it had been just words. The book begins with the question, "Do you really believe what the Bible says?" The chapter continues point out that while as Christians we profess to believe in a God, Creator, and Redeemer who is outside of space and time, very often we act like confirmed skeptics when it comes to supernatural accounts in the Bible. We skip over the parts that are hard, make us uncomfortable, or don't fit within the worldview we've created. What it covers is the make-up of the heavenly government of God, the heads of which were 70 heavenly beings/principalities which were assigned people groups at the dispersion at the Tower of Babel as told in Deuteronomy 32:8. There is a whole other layer to the salvation plan and it was this group, this council, that Jesus is made Lord of all, the name above all other names (Philippians 2:9.) This is the government that he is Lord of, which he won through victory at the

cross. (Isaiah 9:6) *It explains who the Bible is referring to when the world "Elohim" is used.* *It answers questions about those weird verses referring to the Nephilim and the Watchers.* *It explains our purpose as God's "imagers."* *It talks about free will, God's will, destiny, and our purpose.* *It gives a fuller picture of what is truly going on, the "battleground in two realms." (pg 42)* *It explains how the celestial interacts with the terrestrial (Chapter 5: Cosmic Geography)* *It explains the purpose of the Law (Chapter 7: Rules of Engagement.)* I think when we as Christians read the Old Testament, we get hung up on all the sacrifices and completely miss that the way to salvation has always, from first to last, been through faith in the Redeemer, God's Salvation, Yeshua. (Genesis 15:6, Job 19:25) *It also explains the truly demonically inspired effort to eradicate both the Jewish people and the nation of Israel (pg 75.)* *It explains what sacred ground means and the purpose of all those animals sacrificed. (Chapter 8: Sacred Space.)* *It ties in seemingly unrelated conflicts in the Bible and illustrates how they are part of the same battle (Chapter 9: Holy War)* *It gives a reason for the bits and pieces of the plan and picture of the Messiah in the Old Testament and explains why the message was so cryptic (Chapter 10: Hidden in Plain Sight)* *It gives a different perspective than most on the confrontation between Jesus and Satan and what Jesus was really doing in sending out the 12 and then the 70. (Chapter 11: Supernatural Intent)* *It explains the Second Temple understanding of some of the names of God and descriptors and explains why Caiaphas had such a violent reaction when Jesus said, "You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven (Chapter 12: The Cloud Rider.)* *It explains the meaning of Pentecost where the Holy Spirit gave not just gifts, but was equipping for war (Chapter 13: The Great Reversal.)* *It explains who we are as believers (Chapter 14: Not of this World)* *It explains our position in God's family (Chapter 15: Partakers of the Divine Nature)* *It explains what is to come (Chapter 16: Ruling over angels.)* I grew up in the church and even went to a private Christian school for a number of years. I thought I knew the stories and understood it. Then I started reading through the Bible for myself . . . and I realized how much I didn't know and how much I had been taught really didn't line up with what the Bible said. Then when you start learning the details of what was going on at the time the words were written and the context in which the writers wrote and read it in that light, most of the time you have to readjust your understanding of it.=== Who Should Read This Book ==If you or someone you know is struggling with how it all fits, this is a good book to read. For a new believer, it's a good framework for beginning to fill in the pieces. Certain things will make

more sense when they read the Bible. I'm guessing the more "churched" someone is and the more "doctrines" they are versed in, the more resistance they will have to the information presented in the book. If you or someone you know is into "spiritual warfare" as some present it as "warring" against territorial spirits and "taking territory." Read this book. Then read *Needless Casualties of War* by John Paul Jackson. And then go and read Daniel chapter 9 and pay attention to WHAT HE WAS DOING when the angel that came to Daniel and Michael were battling the Prince of Persia. All we are supposed to be doing is 2 Chronicles 7:14 and James 4:7 . . . that's it. If you or someone you know is a Christian but is caught up in UFO religions or Reptilian bloodline conspiracy theories . . . Bless your heart . . . and read this book. If you or someone you know has been following teachings that use Psalm 82:6 which states "Ye are gods; you are children of the Most High;" applying it to humans and then use it as a springboard to all sorts of weird, almost heretical doctrines. Read this book. That verse has been misused by a lot of people in a lot of different ways. For example, Bill Johnson and Kenneth Hagin and their understanding of kenosis and what actually happened in Christ's death and Resurrection. Rabbinic commentary has used it as justification for making Israel the Savior and suffering servant rather than trusting in God alone as Savior. And in reading *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press Popular Patristics Series) recently, I discovered that that misinterpretation was the cornerstone of John of Damascus's defense of icons and justification of venerating saints as gods.

My Big Takeaway

In discussion on another review, someone asked me if I really learned anything new. Let me tell you, yes I did! As I've read through the Bible, particularly the Psalms, the continual reference to Og of Bashan and the bulls of Bashan always made me wonder, "What does that mean?" I knew there was significance to it, but I could not figure out what it was. I would enter different search phrases trying to find articles that discussed it. Nothing. Then I was reading through this book and lo and behold, Chapter 9: Holy War, page 92. It explains exactly why Bashan was significant. "In ancient literature outside the Bible, Bashan was known as 'the place of the serpent.' Two of its major cities, Ashtaroth and Edrei, both mentioned in connection with this journey (Deut 1:4; Josh 13:12), were considered gateways to the underworld realm of the dead. In the context of Israel's supernatural worldview, God had led the Israelites to the gates of hell." Any time David mentions Og of Bashan in the Psalms, he is saying the exact same thing Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Criticisms

ON SOURCES: One of the other comments criticized the book for its lack of references. This is a valid criticism. This book, as it states in the introduction, is a greatly condensed version of *The Unseen Realm*, which is the much longer and heavily cited academic version. I

do agree sources would have been good. I'm not sure why they decided to leave them out. My guess is that when you are taking information from such a huge amount of sources (I mentioned above his library on the Divine Council contains over 4,800 sources) and then process and condense it down to such a small book, a lot of this is synthesized information which would probably be hard to cite one source specifically.

SHARED INFORMATION BETWEEN THE GODHEAD: In Chapter 3, page 28, Heiser makes the claim that the "us" in Genesis 1:26 is not a conversation between the persons of the Trinity but to other members of the divine council. The reasoning is this: "God announces his intention to a group. Who's he talking to? His heavenly host—his council. He's not talking to the other members of the Trinity, because God can't know something they don't! And here the group he's addressing learns what God has decided to do." Could he have been talking to the divine council with this statement? Yes, it's possible. However, it is not proof of it. It could also be another example of a conversation between the Godhead. Such as for example, Psalm 110:1 which states: "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" This is very obviously a conversation between the Father and the Son. And yes, God can know something the others don't. Jesus himself said it was so in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 when he said that only the Father knows the day and the hour of his return. "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."

ON DEMONIC FOCUS There were a few little things here and there where I didn't necessarily agree with his interpretation on some Scriptures, but they mainly had to do with layers of Scripture. The one thing that did bother me was in the very beginning of the book (pg 19,) he made sort of a dismissive statement saying that demons had more important things to do than to bother with us. Quote: "And while the Bible describes demonic possession in rightfully awful ways, intelligent evil has more sinister things to do than to make sock puppets out of people. And on top of that, angel and demons are minor players." I do not agree. I do not think it is something to dismiss or take lightly. For a book that stresses the reality of the supernatural, unseen realm, it seemed like a very odd statement to make. It encourages people to broaden their view of the forces at work, but then pushes it to the theoretical, like it has nothing to do with us personally or our day to day lives. First, this is not Scriptural. Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10.) Yes, coming . . . to us. Peter reinforces this in 1 Peter 5:8 when he says, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Who is he talking to? Believers. He is telling US to watch out, that this is something WE will be dealing with. And then in Ephesians 6:10-12: "10 A final

word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places."I didn't understand the reality of this until a few years ago when I volunteered in a prayer ministry. Someone came for prayer for severe head and neck pain, which she had been suffering from for 16 months. She had been to numerous doctors and none of them could do anything for her. When she came, she said she had gotten to the point where she told God, "Either take me or heal me" because she couldn't bear the extreme, continuous pain any more. She was almost to the point of suicide. The first time she came, she had a little bit of relief, so she came back again. The second time, the people praying with her recognized there was some demonic activity going on and were praying against it. Her pain shot through the roof. They asked her what was going on. She said, "I can see a black faced demon clawing at me trying to get me." That shattered anything I thought I knew about interaction between the demonic and Christians. When your theology becomes reality, sometimes it's a little freaky. It is a very real thing. If you would like to read a more vivid illustration, I recommend *Spirit of the Rainforest: A Yanomamo Shaman's Story*. A note on this review: I preordered this book when it first became available to do so in March 2015. The publication date was later pushed back to December 2015; however, my preorder was still fulfilled by the publisher by mistake in July. This is why you will see a couple of reviews way before the release date.

This is an amazing book, so glad I purchased. If you are a person interested in understanding the Bible and interested in topics which are not discussed in Bible study, this is a book you will must read. Currently reading *Reversing Hermon* and I highly recommend this author.

A must read for Evangelicals. An interpretational study of the Old Testament by Dr. Heiser... who has PhD in Hebrew studies. The book gives new insight and meaning to the New Testament. *Supernatural* is a quick read, basically an Executive Summary to Dr. Heiser's expanded and more comprehensive book "The Unseen Realm". It's my understanding that Dr. Heiser spent 10 to 15 years of extensive research before the book was published.

Great book! Heiser does a good job of taking information and breaking it down to be easily understood, and applicable in our lives. Very clearly stated, he doesn't muddle anything, even when it may be controversial. He translates the Hebrew to what it plainly says, and shows where various

Bible translations do the same, then explains what it meant back when it was written, and how we can view/understand that concept today.

The Bible is God's living, breathing word. This deep dive only makes it more beautiful.

Extremely valuable and richly informative. Although totally correct it is not the normal information one would expect from a pulpit. It was peer reviewed by experts and I highly commend it for the accuracy and the immense research behind it.

Dr. Heiser is correct. I have not read my Bible the same way again, and now it all connects together. No more ignoring the hard passages, and now I have a new heart for the lost. Praise Yeshua for you, Dr. Heiser.

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