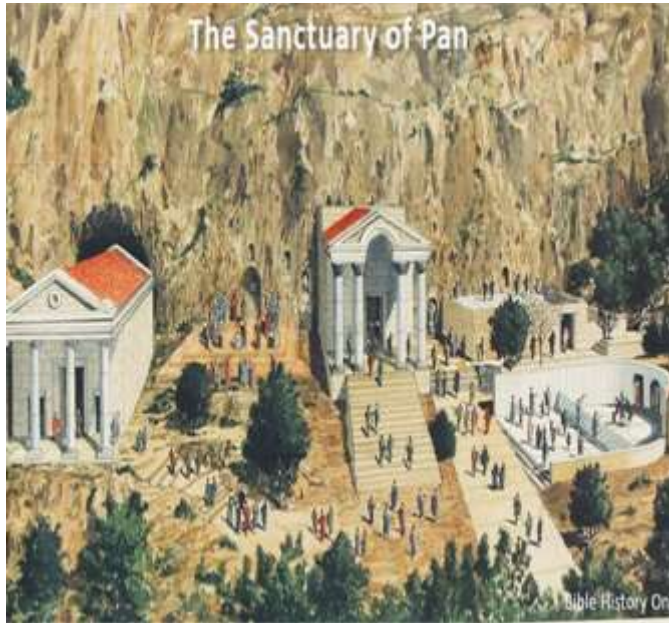


In our last study, we learned that Cosmic Geography is the theological concept and study of places in the Bible where Heaven and Earth met, where something supernatural or prophetically ordained took place. This time we'll be looking at a different, yet still very powerful location, a place called Mount Hermon and the city located at its base, Caesarea Philippi.



This place has a very long history. It was located about 5-6 miles from the Israelite city of Dan. It was rebuilt and renamed Caesarea Philippi in 20 B.C. by King Herod's son

Philip, in honor Tiberius Caesar. The name he gave it literally means "Philip's Caesarea", but it had a much older name. It sits at the foot of the tallest mountain in Israel, Syria, and Lebanon; a mountain called Mount Hermon. We'll learn more about that mountain in a later but first let's continue to unpack the history of Caesarea Philippi.



Originally, this place was called Paneas. It was a site dedicated to the Greek god Pan and the original temple, before Philip had it rebuilt, was first constructed around 300 years before Christ. This is an artist's rendition of what the rebuilt place looked like in Christ's time. There was a huge temple of Pan and several other structures dedicated to the worship of this pagan god.

Notice that the main buildings were built over and connected to these caves. These caves held a significant spiritual meaning, especially the biggest one. It even had a special name that went all the way back to the time of Alexander the Great. And we'll get to that, but first we need to get the full context of what HAD happened here, what WAS happening here, and what was ABOUT to happen here.



Without getting too deep into mythology, because we're here for Bible study not myth study, I'd like to share a little info about Pan in case you never heard of him. Pan was the little g god of shepherds and flocks. (That seems oddly coincidental). He was also a god of fertility and music.

His worship involved debauchery, perversion, and revelry. One of the things he was known for was instilling fear in others. That's where we get the word PANIC from, which means "caused by Pan". That's the context of what WAS happening there in Christ's time. Now for what HAD happened there.

As I said before, the first temple of Pan was constructed around 300 years before Christ, but this place, at the foot of this huge mountain called Hermon, had been associated with the worship of false gods for thousands of years even before that. We can find proof of that not only in historical academia, but more importantly, in our very own Bible.

Joshua 13:1-6 Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and **there remains very much land yet to be possessed.**" ² This is the land that yet remains: all the territory of the Philistines and all that of the Geshurites, ³ from Sihor, which is east of Egypt, as far as the border of Ekron northward (which is counted as Canaanite); the five lords of the Philistines—the Gazites, the Ashdodites, the Ashkelonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites; ⁴ from the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians as far as Aphek, to the border of the Amorites; ⁵ the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrise, from **Baal Gad below Mount Hermon** as far as the entrance to Hamath; ⁶ all the inhabitants of the mountains from Lebanon as far as the Brook Misrephoth, and all the Sidonians—them I will drive out from before the children of Israel; only divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you.

The context of these verses is God telling Joshua it's time to take possession of the land. Some of the promised land had been conquered, but not yet **possessed** by Israel. In chapter 12, the kingdoms and kings that Moses and Joshua conquered are listed, but here in chapter 13, God is reminding Joshua that the work wasn't done and some of these places haven't been claimed yet, even though they've been conquered.

I want to particularly look at **Baal- Gad** below Mount Hermon. If you look in your concordance, you'll see that Baal-Gad was located at the exact same spot as **Paneas**, which was later called **Caesarea Philippi**. This place had spiritual significance as far back as Moses. Let's look at Joshua 12...

Joshua 12:4-6 *The other king was **Og king of Bashan** and his territory, who was of the **remnant of the giants**, who dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, ⁵ and **reigned over Mount Hermon**, over Salcah, over all Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and over half of Gilead to the border of Sihon king of Heshbon. ⁶ These Moses the servant of the LORD and the children of Israel had conquered; and Moses the servant of the LORD had given it as a possession to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh.*

These verses tell us of the lands that God, through Moses, had conquered and given to Israel to inhabit. That's why in the next chapter, God reminds Joshua that these lands are still inhabited by the enemies of God's people. If you're familiar with King Og, you know he was a giant, what the Bible calls a **RAPHAIM**, which was a race related to the **Nephilim**. Og was the ruler of a vast kingdom and he claimed rulership over Mount Hermon and that city at the foot of the mountain. There's a reason for this...

1 Chronicles 5:23 So the children of the half-tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land. Their numbers increased from Bashan to Baal Hermon, that is, to Senir, or Mount Hermon.



It wasn't just the city that had pagan religious importance, it was the entire mountain. That's why the city was built to begin with. The mountain itself was dedicated to the

worship of false gods. The Canaanites and Phoenicians worshiped Baal here, and many other ancient cultures worshiped many other false gods here. Through the ages this mountain had been considered a place where men could interact with the gods.

In fact, in some ancient pagan beliefs, Mount Hermon was considered a sacred mountain because **it was believed the gods descended to earth on this mountain**, and in ancient Jewish texts it was **the place where the fallen angels fell** when they were casted out of heaven.

Even without the spiritual implications, Mount Hermon was special for a few reasons. For one, it's the highest mountain in the area, rising to over 9200 feet above sea level. Another interesting fact is that it's the main source of the Jordan River. From those caves came a huge spring that eventually turned into the Jordan. Combine all that with the spiritual aspects of the place, and **to the ancient pagans** this place was the equivalent of Vatican city to the Catholics or Mecca to the Muslims. Regardless of which culture took possession of the land, this area retained its demonic spiritual significance.

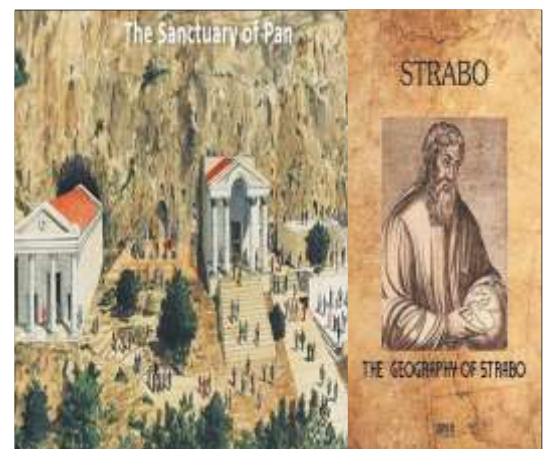
Unfortunately, that trend held true even after God's people took control of the land...

1 Kings 12:26-30 And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: 27 If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah." 28 Therefore the king asked advice, **made two calves of gold**, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" 29 And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.

You may remember that the city of Dan was located about 5 to 6 miles from Mount Hermon, so Jeroboam set up these golden calves right where you could see the summit of the Mountain in the background.

Eventually, worship of Baal morphed into the worship of Greek fertility gods. Which leads us back to the Temple of Pan.

At the back of the big temple was a huge cave. It was known as The Cave of Pan. But it had another, older name. Sometime around the year 20 AD, an ancient Greek historian and geographer named Strabo wrote a book called Geographica.



In that book he catalogued events and places as far west as Spain and as far south as Egypt and everything in between. In his account of the temple of Pan, he mentions the Cave of Pan and calls it by this other name. Strabo called it ... **The Gates of Hades**, or as we say nowadays, **The Gates of Hell**.

So here's the summery of what we've learned so far... At the foot of the tallest mountain in Israel and the surrounding lands, there was a place that had been **dedicated to worshipping demons and false gods for thousands of years**. It had been called **Baal-Gad**, after the false god Baal, and had been a place associated with giants, (Interestingly, the common meaning for Baal-Gad is "Lord of Fortune", but the root word for Gad also means Invasion, so an acceptable but less common meaning is "**Lord of The Invasion**", as in the leader of those fallen angels that invaded earth on Mount Hermon...

Later it was called **Panea** after the **demon god Pan**, and finally in the time of Christ it was called **Caesarea Philippi**, after the **Roman Caesar who was considered a god himself**. Through all that time, it maintained its status as a sacred place, **dedicated to false gods and demons**. Lastly we learned that the main cave there was known by a strange name, **the Gates of Hell**.

Matthew 16:13-18 *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ¹⁴ And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. ¹⁵ He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? ¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and **the gates of hell shall not prevail** against it.*

Right here, Christ is making an announcement right at the enemy's door step. He's putting them on notice that the paganism of the past was about to be "IN THE PAST". He's declaring **FROM HEAVEN- THROUGH EARTH- AND TO HELL** that the Son of the Living God has come to destroy the kingdom of darkness. But wait, there's more...

Matthew 16:19-23 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. ²¹ **From that time** Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be **killed, and be raised the third day.**

²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "**Get behind Me, Satan!** You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

In the same conversation where Christ has just beat on the door of The Gates Of Hell, He then drops a bomb and **FROM THAT TIME**, reveals that He will be killed and be resurrected. This is the place where the plan **of our Salvation by His Sacrifice** is first unveiled. At the foot of Mount Hermon and at the very door of the stronghold of satan. Notice as soon as He speaks these things, satan uses one of Christ's closest disciples to cast fear and doubt. That was satan's own fear and doubt, satan's own **PANIC** manifesting in Peter.

Satan and all the principalities and powers of darkness knew who Christ was, they just weren't sure why He was there. You'll never find a demon asking Christ, "who are you". They knew who He was, but they weren't able to put the puzzle pieces together to know why He was beating on their door. But they would soon find out.

Matthew 16:24-28 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and **take up his cross**, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. 28 Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

This is the end of chapter 16, but I want you to notice the phrase "take up his cross". That's an odd statement. A cross was an instrument of torture and execution.

It was a Roman invention, and although the Jewish culture was familiar with it, it wasn't part of their culture. It wasn't something they used in their metaphors and vernacular. Here is Christ revealing His plan, and then **rebuking satan through Peter** and immediately saying that those that desire to follow Him must "take up their cross". He says this, months before the crucifixion. This is spoken way before Peter denies Him and lies on Him. Right here, at the end of chapter 16 and at the Gates of Hell, Christ reveals **HOW** He will die. He then goes on to say that some of the people with Him at **the foot of Mount Hermon** will get a sneak peek at His glory. That a few of them won't have to wait until His resurrection or their death to see His splendor. The very next verse after that starts the next chapter.

Matthew 17:1-5 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

This is the called the "Transfiguration", which means transformed, and in theology, this place is called "The Mount of Transfiguration".

The Bible never specifically says where this mountain is located, it just says "**on a high mountain**", and as usual, scholars are divided on what mountain it actually is. "Church tradition" says that it was probably Mount Tabor. That's based only on one source, the fact that one of the "church fathers" a guy named Origen, basically heard from someone who heard from someone, that Mount Tabor was the place.

I'm not able to tell you with absolute certainty which mountain was the place. But I do want to push back against that tradition. All I can do is share some facts and let you decide for yourself.

- The Bible never says they left the area of Caesarea Philippi, only that 6 days later Christ took 3 of His disciples on a “**high mountain**”
- Mount Tabor is about 1900 ft tall - **Mount Hermon is over 9200 ft tall**
- Caesarea Philippi is about 50 miles from Mount Tabor - **Caesarea Philippi is at the foot of Mount Hermon**
- Mount Tabor has no direct connection with ancient demon worship – **Mount Hermon has been connected to demon worship for close to 7000 years**

I'll end with this...



This is an arial photo of Mount Hermon with the ruins of Caesarea Philippi down at the bottom. What if Christ not only kicked on the door of **the Gates of Hell,**

but more importantly, He kicked the door down and walked right up into the fortress of the kingdom of darkness and showed out! He not only put them on notice, but He went in up there and punched them in the mouth. From that point on, God's Kingdom had come and His will would be done, on earth as it is in heaven... AMEN.