

CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY

LESSON 7: THE SECOND REBELLION

Objectives

- Learn about the three predominant interpretations for who the “sons of God” in Genesis 6 might have been.
- Consider the implications of the view that angelic beings were having children with humans.
- Trace this concept through Scripture.
- Recognize that God’s enemies try to prevent him from keeping his promises.

Introduction

We are now entering the second major section of the course. We’ve laid some foundations for understanding major themes of scripture, what God’s purposes are (as well as how he communicates them), and how we should approach this book we call the Bible. In the next several lessons (the “Rebellion” section) we’ll turn our attention to God’s enemies. We’ll learn about some of their purposes and strategies, which will equip us to be discerning as we navigate the reality of modern life in a world system that is opposed to God.

We’re actually not going to start with the entity we call “Satan,” though he does seem to be the one in charge of the others. We’ll get to him eventually, but first we need to cast a much wider net if we’re going to understand how the ancient Israelite viewed the spiritual realm.

Understanding Genesis 6

If you asked the average knowledgeable Christian why the world is the way it is, they would probably answer that it was the Fall in **Genesis 3**. A religious Jewish person around the first century would have said that it’s because of *three* separate rebellions. The Fall is the first one, but we’ll find that there were two other significant rebellions against God that have impacted the conditions of planet Earth. In this lesson we’ll be talking about the second rebellion.

People multiplied after Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden, and after the chronicle of several generations, we find a very odd paragraph in **Genesis 6**. Our interpretation of this paragraph will greatly influence what we believe about how God’s enemies interact with our world.

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. Genesis 6:1-4

There are several explanations as to what really happened between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of man.” I believe the preponderance of evidence supports the idea that the sons of God were immortal beings that were actually marrying human women and creating hybrid

offspring. They were “acting in the mode of creators by creating living beings in their own image.”¹ My conviction on this matter influences my understanding of the types of things Satan and his forces can do in our world. It also influences how I interpret various passages of Scripture, which means that this is not necessarily just a “fringe” issue, to be skipped over if you find it uncomfortable. Intelligent, godly people come to different conclusions on this matter because it is not perfectly spelled out in English.

In this lesson, I’ll take you through the journey of how I came to embrace the supernatural view of Genesis 6:1-2. In essence, it becomes a simple matter of weighing the evidence supporting and opposing each view. We will conclude with a discussion about why it matters.

Extrabiblical Source: 1 Enoch

We’ve already discussed the value of consulting sources outside of the Bible for historical information and interpretive clues. This is one of those cases in which it’s essential to see what ancient people actually believed. A few historical sources are even quoted by the Biblical authors about this matter and were found among the copies of Scripture in the Qumran caves with the Dead Sea Scrolls. The quotations in the Bible show us that the Biblical writers were familiar with these works and considered them to be reliable at the time of their writing.

The *Book of Watchers (1 Enoch)* is cited by Jude:

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”
Jude 14-15

Jude’s quotation of *1 Enoch* proves that he was familiar with the text and considered at least this section to be reliable, though it does not mean he considered it to be inspired scripture. Much of what current scholarship understands about non-Satanic evil entities prior to the New Testament comes from this source.² *1 Enoch* gives a great deal of detail about the situation we find in Genesis 6. If it could be proven to be completely reliable and traceable back to Enoch himself, it would put the debate to rest about whether or not these beings were supernatural. It’s not that easy, though, because this work was written in Hebrew two centuries before Christ (not pre-Flood, as it would be if Enoch himself had written it), so at best it contains things Enoch said as they were passed down by oral tradition. The confusion increases when we find there are various works under Enoch’s name that are far different from each other. *1 Enoch* can certainly be very useful for matters of grammar and vocabulary, and I believe it is an important work to consider. It demonstrates conclusively that people two hundred years before Christ believed that angels were procreating with humans and that they attributed this phenomenon to the time and teaching of Enoch.

¹ Heiser, Michael. *Demons: What the Bible Really Says About the Powers of Darkness*. Defender Publishing, 2020. Page 125.

² You can easily find the text of the 1 Enoch online if you want to read it for yourself. Better yet, read *A Companion to the Book of Enoch* by Michael S. Heiser to help you gently through it!

Alternate Views

We will see what some other historical sources have to say later on, but let's pause briefly to consider what the other options might be if the events of Genesis 6 are not about a supernatural incursion. A fuller exploration of the strengths and weakness of each of the following three views is found in your Supplemental Notes.

View #1: The sons of God are the male line of Seth.

The predominant interpretation that is currently taught in evangelical seminaries regarding the identity of the sons of God is that they were the godly males from the line of Seth and that the sin being described in this passage is either polygamy or intermarriage between the godly men and the ungodly women.

View #2: The sons of God are royalty and the daughters of men are commoners.

This view makes note of the fact that royal people of the ancient Near East were often considered to be part divine. It is common in royal inscriptions to find that a king claimed to have divine heritage. The idea is that since they called themselves the "flesh of the gods," we can interpret "sons of God" in the Biblical account to refer to these royals. Their sin was that they were taking any women they wanted for their own sexual use, regardless of whether the women were married or who they belonged to. They set a bad example, and the whole world followed their example, necessitating the Flood.³

View #3: The sons of God were demons who possessed human men.

Some prefer the idea that the sons of God were demons that inhabited and controlled human men. The offspring of these unions with human women would then, of course, have been fully human. It is attractive to those who understand that the Hebrew words are clearly pointing to immortal beings and humans, yet cannot go so far as to acknowledge that these beings can procreate directly with humans and produce hybrid offspring.

The Sons of God Were Supernatural Beings

This is the view I am convinced is correct, and I believe the scholarship that has been published since about 2010 puts it much more clearly in the lead than what was available before that.⁴ Because I will be referring back to it several times as we make our way through

³ "An alternate understanding may be found in a practice noted in the Gilgamesh Epic...his exercising the right of the first night with a new bride: 'He will couple with the wife-to-be, he first of all, the bridegroom after.'" Walton, John. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, Volume 1*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009. 44. In other words, the king has the right to have sex with every new bride before her husband does. The author concedes that one problem with this being understood as the great sin of Genesis 6 is that the practice is infrequently mentioned in ancient literature.

⁴ In the early 2000s, scholars began to analyze ancient writings and comparing them to the biblical accounts. One important example was the Mesopotamian Apkallu myth, which claimed that Babylonian religion was superior to all others. We can see when comparing parallel details that the author of Genesis was clearly attempting to show that the Apkallu (Watchers) were evil, not heroic. By dispensing forbidden knowledge to humans, they caused human depravity to proliferate. When reading ancient sources like this, it becomes impossible to conclude anything other than the fact that the people believed there had been a mingling of the divine and the human. See Heiser, Michael. *Demons*, pages 125-6.

Choose You This Day, it's important for me to bring you to that conclusion with me. I do not need you to agree with me in the end, but it is my hope that you will at least understand how a rational person in modern times could come to this understanding. Let's tackle a couple of the major objections to this view before we look at further support for it.

Angels Cannot Reproduce, Can They?

When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. Mark 12:25 (see also Matthew 22:30)

This passage is generally used as the front line of defense against the idea that angels procreated with humans. Doesn't it say that angels don't get married because they are non-sexual beings? But notice the descriptive phrase about the angels that don't marry: "angels *in heaven*." This leaves room for the possibility that angels could leave heaven and marry human women on earth. That seems like a pretty desperate leap to make, though, so we need to see if there is any support. First look at the parallel passage in Luke:

The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. Luke 20:34-36

Jesus is answering the challenge of the Sadducees, who claimed there was no resurrection. Jesus directly refutes their belief by giving them some information about what it will be like for those humans who will be resurrected (believers). He makes the shocking statement that in that state they will be equal to angels and have the status of "sons of God."⁵ The context is clearly post-resurrection, not pre-Flood, so we cannot use this passage to claim that angels have never been able to marry. All we know for sure is that angels in heaven in the eternal kingdom do not marry (and neither will we, even though we marry now). The entire point of the passage is not to describe the sexual capabilities of angels or whether they can physically pass on seed, but to show that there will surely be resurrection from the dead and that the new order will be different from the way things are now. There will be no need for procreation in the New Earth because everyone will have an immortal resurrected body. That will be an entirely different context than the one we see in Genesis 6, which renders these passages describing angels in heaven inapplicable.

Jude, the brother of Jesus, states that his purpose for writing is to contend for the faith against false teachers. As an example of the severity of God's judgment against those who reject Him, Jude mentions how God rescued His people from slavery and afterwards destroyed unbelieving Egypt. Then he gives another example, which he assumes his readers are familiar with because he offers no explanation.

And the angels who did not stay within their own *position of authority*, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day. Jude verse 6

⁵ Hold on to that... it is indeed incredible that believers take on the same designation that used to be reserved for supernatural beings.

The word for “proper dwelling” or “habitation” is the Greek word *oiketerion* and it is only found here in **Jude** and in **2 Corinthians 5:2**, which is directly talking about the “habitation” or house that we earnestly desire to be clothed in after this life.

For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling... 2 Corinthians 5:2

Oiketerion is referring to a dwelling place above and beyond the constraints of our Adamic human bodies—an immortal body! The angels in the Jude passage did not stay within their *oiketerion*, but left the place where they belonged. They received a severe punishment for this activity, which was to be chained up in darkness until Judgment Day.

One way that we know Jude was talking about the Genesis 6 incident is that he goes on to quote the book of *1 Enoch*, which goes into great detail about the immortal beings Enoch calls “Watchers”⁶ who left heaven and taught many things to mankind, as well as engaging in genetic experiments with plants and animals. A key point in *1 Enoch* is the great sin of the Watchers as they married human women and had children by them who were half “god” and half human.⁷

Peter provides the second witness that Jude is talking about the time before the Flood.

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell⁸ and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly... 2 Peter 2:4-5

Peter is clearly associating the same angels described by Jude with the time of Noah. He even uses largely the same wording. Both Jude and Peter assume that their readers know what they are talking about, even though both of these passages seem odd and random to modern readers. We tend to assume that these men had some kind of special revelation from God about the angels, rather than considering that they were simply referring to commonly-held historical documents (even though Jude even specifies that he is quoting Enoch).

As for the question of whether angels have the capacity to physically reproduce, we can make a few observations. First, angels look like men when they appear to people. Often they have to tell people not to be afraid when they see them, but they are never described as having wings or looking anything like the depictions of angels that are common in our culture.

[Abraham] lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth. Genesis 18:2

⁶ Daniel also uses the term “watchers” three times: Daniel 4:13, 4:17, and 4:23. Each time the text calls them “holy ones” and even describes them coming down from heaven. Another entire line of study could spring from this idea that supernatural entities are watching or observing humanity.

⁷ Again, this should not be misinterpreted as a claim that *1 Enoch* is inspired Scripture, simply that it was the predominant view at least two hundred years before Christ, and probably for much longer.

⁸ The Greek word here for “hell” is *tartaros*. In Greek mythology, Tartarus is where the Titan giants were imprisoned... giants who happened to be half god and half human. Would Peter have alluded to a popular Greek myth if he did not believe this detail had a historical basis?

Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate. Genesis 18:8

If immortal entities only have spirit bodies, how did they eat physical food? And what happened to the food after they ate it? If they can leave heaven and appear on the earth as men and eat food, isn't it possible that they could also engage in other physical activities? In fact, two of these same "men" later entered Sodom and were nearly attacked by the residents who wanted to commit sexual sin with them. Is it possible that they were instantly recognized to be immortals (just as Abraham had recognized them) and that part of the attraction was a shared memory of the "wonderful" knowledge the immortals had brought to mankind before the Flood?⁹ We cannot be conclusive about the answers to any of these questions, but together they make the case that we shouldn't conclude that it is impossible for supernatural beings to reproduce while on earth.¹⁰

These entities are "spiritual" beings because they do not originate from earth. They are not made of the earth like Adam was. Yet they can assume physical form, even though that is not their normal state (just like humans can be transported to the divine realm, as in **Isaiah 6** and **2 Corinthians 12**, even though they do not usually exist in that plane). They can also interact with the physical things of earth:

- An angel from God struck down many people after David sinned by pridefully taking a census (**2 Samuel 24:17**).
- God's angel shut the mouths of lions (**Daniel 6:22**).
- An angel struck Peter's side to wake him up and caused the chains to fall off Peter's hands (**Acts 12:7**).

To review, we have noted that angels in heaven do not marry, but we have asked whether they can leave heaven and appear in bodies that can physically interact with the creation. In response, we found a specific passage in **Jude** that mentions angels leaving their proper habitation, and we have connected that to a passage in **1 Corinthians** using the same word that clearly means "immortal body."¹¹ We also have a passage in **1 Peter** that uses the same wording as Jude to describe some angels' sin and the punishment allotted to them, which also

⁹ *1 Enoch* chapter 8 describes how the Watchers taught the people various skills, including weaponry, jewelry, herbal medicine, cosmetics, precious stones, dyes, enchantments, astrology, astronomy, and meteorology.

¹⁰ One other factor to consider is that there is no mention of female angels in the Bible. (Observe the modern fascination with feminine angels that guide and protect people!) The notion that all angels may be male is interesting, although this is not the reason Jesus gave for why they do not reproduce in heaven.

¹¹ Sometimes people use Luke 24:39 as an argument against the "angel" view: "Touch me, and see. A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." Jesus here is trying to prove that his resurrected body is real and that he is not a ghostly apparition. We must take his words at face value and agree that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, but since we are not told anything about the nature or features of the sons of God, we must use the evidence at hand to conclude that they are able (or at least were able at one time in history) to take on flesh and blood bodies when they leave their habitation and come to earth. Just because God did not explain this mechanism to us does not make it impossible. The fact that Jacob actually wrestled with a spirit being to the point that he received a permanent injury (Genesis 32) is further evidence that there is more going on than we fully understand. Or we can look to Hebrew 13:2 and see that angels can look so much like humans that we might "entertain them unaware." Jesus' proclamation that he was not a ghost does not negate the ability of angels to take on bodies. The divide between the physical and spiritual worlds is a great mystery to us. I contend that God has purposely veiled it for our protection and that any attempt by humans to break through it (other than humble prayer to the Living God) should be considered witchcraft.

unequivocally connects these particular entities to the time just prior to Noah's flood.¹² Finally, we have shown that at least one time when angels appeared on earth they ate food, which cannot be done by a purely spiritual entity, and we have seen other examples in which things that originate in the spiritual realm can indeed make a physical impact in the earthly realm.

Immortal Beings and Reproduction

If these entities *did* reproduce, wouldn't it have to be "according to their own kind?"

I find this to be an extremely compelling question. Cats can't breed with dogs, and giraffes can't breed with elephants, so how could angels breed with humans?

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:24-25

I agree wholeheartedly that mixing the kinds is almost always a very bad idea and does not happen in nature! There is only one time when it was a very good idea, and that was the time that God Himself mixed "kinds" when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and caused her to become pregnant with a child that was both His seed and hers.¹³ This example shows us that a non-terrestrial being can combine DNA with a human and the result is something unusual. One might argue that only God can do this. While that is a very good point to raise for consideration, it is not certain. We simply do not know exactly what abilities the sons of God were given or what their bodies were like when they left heaven. What we can be sure of is that only the Creator has the *right* to do such a thing. If this is indeed what was happening in Genesis 6, one can easily see why this was such an affront to God and why the punishment was so severe.

Words and Phrases

As we proceed to further support for the angel view, it's very important for us to be on the same page in our understanding of a few words so you know what I mean when I use them.

¹² Incidentally, without an understanding that we are speaking of angels having children with human women prior to the Flood, these passages in Jude and 1 Peter remain undecipherable. We would have to conclude that these authors were given direct revelation from God about the angels—and that for some reason, Jude and Peter decided to use their insider information as examples to illustrate their points without giving any kind of explanation to their audiences as to what they're talking about.

¹³ Quote from Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, 186-187: "What isn't mind-blowing about Jesus having both a divine and human nature fused together? For that matter, what doesn't offend the modern scientific mind about God going through a woman's birth canal and enduring life as a human, having to learn how to talk, walk, eat with a spoon, be potty trained, and go through puberty? All these things are far more shocking than Genesis 6:1-4, and yet this is what Scripture explicitly affirms when it informs us that the second person of the Godhead became a man...The notion that the sons of God came to earth in fleshly form ought to be more palatable than the incarnation, since it is less supernaturally spectacular."

Angel

This word is typically defined as a celestial being; something of a spiritual nature that lives in heaven or in a different dimension. It's often connected with the idea that they are God's "messengers."¹⁴ We generally understand that they can somehow interact with our world, but the Bible does not tell us anything about the mechanics of how they can be invisible sometimes and have physical substance at other times. "Angel" is a very easy word to use when we mean a supernatural being created by God to do His work, yet it is actually a general word that encompasses several kinds of supernatural creatures. Cherubim, seraphim, archangels, good angels, fallen angels, sons of God... all of these terms could identify beings that we could call angels, and there may be some overlap. For example, what we call "fallen angels" may also be "sons of God." And there are likely sons of God who are still loyal to God, so those would be "good angels." The point is, the word "angels" is easy to say, but it isn't the most descriptive.¹⁵ I think of "sons of God" as a class of spiritual being that can appear as men and are different from cherubim and seraphim. I do not find evidence in Scripture to help us identify for certain whether archangels, such as Michael, are also sons of God or if they are of a different class. Nor do we have evidence that Satan is from one of these classes of angels or if he was something different, but I believe it is accurate to call him a "fallen angel" if we mean that he is a celestial being of a spiritual nature (from a different dimension) that is in rebellion against God. Still not clear? That's okay, but just be aware that we're pretty generic with the word "angel" but sometimes it would be better to be more specific.

A god

When used with a lowercase "g," this word means, "A being of supernatural powers or attributes, believed in and worshipped by a people, especially a male deity thought to control some part of nature or reality."¹⁶ Angels can be gods. They are spiritual entities and are worshipped by people, which is why they are also called "divine beings" in biblical scholarship. This can be confusing because we know that there is only one God, so how can we say there are other gods? To be clear, there is one Creator, one True God. He made everything else, including creatures that have different powers and attributes than humans. It's not as though Yahweh and the gods are of the same essence while Yahweh happens to be the highest-ranking. As Creator of all, He is completely *other*, and if the gods are ever similar to Him, it's because He made them that way in that area (just as God made humans to share some of his attributes, yet we remain creatures and will never be equal with God). He is sovereign over everything, which means that He ultimately decides what any created being can or cannot do.

Yet in His brilliance and His desire for relationship with His creatures, He accomplishes His purposes while also accommodating their decision-making and choices to some degree. We do not know anything about why some angels chose to obey God and others chose to sin against God, but some of them did indeed sin against God. Because their powers and knowledge are superior to those of humanity (at least in some ways), humans naturally came to worship them, to think of them as gods, and to create exaggerated stories about their powers. They are in no way equal to God or threatening to Him, and He allows them to exist

¹⁴ "Messenger" is the general meaning of the word "angel" in both Hebrew (*malakh*) and Greek (*angelos*).

¹⁵ Michael Heiser would go further to say that angels are lower-class messengers while sons of God are further up in the hierarchy of the heavenly order. (*Unseen Realm*, 24, with its footnote). I have no reason to disagree, but am attempting to define how we actually *use* the word "angels," rather than adhere to the technicality. If you really want to get technical (and especially see the variation of usages from the Old Testament to the New with Hebrew and Greek), you should read his book, aptly titled *Angels*.

¹⁶ The Free Dictionary by Farlex, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>

and even uses them for His own purposes at times. By calling them gods or divine beings,¹⁷ we are only acknowledging that they are immortal, supernatural beings that people sometimes worship. When YHWH commanded that the Israelites have no other gods before Him, He was not only talking about imaginary gods that were entirely invented by people. This is evidenced by the second commandment, which includes the prohibition against worshiping images that look like heavenly beings, and by God's repeated warnings not to worship the "heavenly host."¹⁸

Sons of God (Old Testament)

Since the entities we're talking about in Genesis 6 are called "the sons of God" in English, we'll need to look at this phrase more closely.

When one is trying to understand the meaning of a phrase in the Bible, the starting place is to see where else it is used. Since the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the passage in question is in the Old Testament, we begin by looking at all the occurrences of the same Hebrew phrase. Once we have done that, it is always important to look in the New Testament to see where we find the same English phrase (in this case, "sons of God") and note the meanings of the Greek equivalent(s) and the ways that the phrase is used in context.

Bene ha elohim

The Hebrew phrase *bene ha elohim* is used only five times in the Old Testament¹⁹, and it is consistently translated "sons of God." Two occurrences are in Genesis 6:1-4 (our passage) and the other three are found in Job.

The *sons of God* saw that the daughters of men were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Genesis 6:2

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the *sons of God* came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. Genesis 6:4

Now there was a day when the *sons of God* came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. Job 1:6

Again there was a day when the *sons of God* came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. Job 2:1

On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the *sons of God* shouted for joy? Job 38:6-7

¹⁷ The term "divine beings" is used in much of the scholarship that is available about the Divine Council, which we will explore in the next lesson. It can be confusing because we often associate the word "divine" with God, when in some contexts it just refers to any being from the spirit realm, much like the word *elohim*. Don't be alarmed if you see it used frequently in literature on this subject. It doesn't mean "equal with Yahweh."

¹⁸ See Deuteronomy 4:19. The word for "host" of heaven (אֲצַבָּאוֹת or *tsaba*) has to do with armies and warfare and it speaks of the host being allotted to all the people, so it is not only talking about planets and stars that people mistakenly worship. There are evil spiritual realities behind the worship of natural objects. This is just an introduction that will be further developed as we go.

¹⁹ Deuteronomy 32:8 is another occurrence in some manuscripts, which will be important for future consideration, but does not need to be brought into this discussion.

While the Genesis usages are debated, those found in Job are not. These three all clearly reference something happening in the heavens, or spiritual dimension. No humans existed at the time that the cornerstone of the earth was laid, so “sons of God” in that case cannot possibly be used of men.

Bene 'elim

To do a more thorough investigation, we will broaden our scope to catch Hebrew phrases that are very similar. We find two uses of the phrase *bene 'elim*.

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Psalm 29:1
(The ESV footnote gives other possible translations for “heavenly beings:” “*sons of God, or sons of might*”)

Ascribe to Jehovah, ye *sons of the mighty*, ascribe to Jehovah honour and strength.
(Young’s Literal Translation)

This proclamation closely follows a Canaanite hymn in which the sons of El are members of his pantheon. This, along with the obvious context of the verse, show that we are again speaking of angelic beings. Moving on:

For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord? Who among the *heavenly beings* is like the Lord, a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him? Psalm 89:6-7

This one leaves us with a few more questions about what that “council of the holy ones” may be, but for our purposes today, *bene 'elim* is once again clearly translated with angelic beings in mind—not human men.

Bene 'elyon

One other similar Hebrew phrase is *bene 'elyon*, which is translated, “sons of the Most High.”

I said, “You are gods, *sons of the Most High*, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.” Psalm 82:6-7

This actually takes us into some territory we’ll be covering in the next lesson and includes a bit of a fascinating rabbit-trail, so I moved it to the Supplemental Notes. There I touch on the evidence for this usage also applying to spiritual beings, even though it’s not the way many commentaries present it.

In any case, those who claim that the sons of God in Genesis 6 are human beings usually say there are not enough usages of the term in the Old Testament to allow us to conclude they were angelic. It is true that three exact correlations, two usages of one close variation, and one usage of another do not constitute a great deal of examples to work with. Yet it should be noted that one hundred percent of these usages refer to supernatural beings.

Sons of God (New Testament)

When we move to the New Testament, we find many more usages of the English phrase "sons of God," (*huioi theou* in Greek) and we will see that these all clearly involve *humans*, not angels. This becomes very exciting, as it helps us understand what the term really means and how profoundly it illustrates what has been accomplished through Christ.

We already looked at one significant example in which *huioi theou* is used of believers:

...[Humans who are resurrected from the dead] are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. Luke 20:36

Luke uses *huioi theou* a different time to identify Adam. Luke's genealogy of Christ begins with Joseph, the son of Heli by marriage²⁰, and goes all the way back to Adam.

...the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

The majority of the other times we find "son of God" in the New Testament, it refers to Jesus. But sometimes the term (or a related phrase, *tekna theou*, which is not gender-specific) is used to refer to believers in Christ.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Romans 8:14

...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. Galatians 3:26

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. 1 John 3:1

What qualifies believers to be called sons (children) of God? We experience a new birth and become part of His family! We are a brand-new creation of God.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Adam was directly made by God's own hand. The body of Jesus was a unique, direct creation of God, as His only begotten Son.²¹ The phrase "son of God" refers to one who is not born of another, but is born of God Himself. This is why it is so very profound that WE are now called sons/children of God! We are new, direct creations of our Father, and we belong to Him. Another way to look at it is that we have given up being sons of Adam (our old nature) and have been adopted into God's family spiritually with an eventual physical fulfillment.

²⁰ Many scholars believe Matthew's genealogy is that of Joseph, but Luke's is that of Mary. The idea is that Joseph could legally be called Heli's son because he was married to Heli's daughter, Mary, but Luke makes it clear that Joseph was not really the biological father of Jesus. Thus, since Hebrew genealogies are not traced through the female line, Luke begins with the next male in the line from Jesus: Heli.

²¹ "Begot" means to produce one of its own kind. Dogs beget dogs and humans beget humans. When God begot a one-of-a-kind son (*monogenes*), that Son was also God. The deity of this Son should never be confused with our own status as sons of God. We are direct creations of God, but we are not begotten by God in the same way that Jesus was. He eternally existed before He was ever begotten as a man and we did not.

Thus before the cross of Jesus there were no sons of Adam (*benei Adam* i.e., humans) who were *also* sons of God. The right for humans (*benei Adam*—sons of Adam) to become sons of God only occurred after the finished work of the cross. Therefore all references to sons of God in the Old Testament (that is to say before the cross and resurrection) were angels. They were angels because they were direct creations of God.²²

Unpacking Genesis 6

There are several other important considerations as we seek to unpack what was happening in the time leading up to Noah's Flood.

Noah's Pedigree

The attention given to Noah's genetic line is significant. We are given an entire chapter (Genesis 5) to trace his ancestry all the way back to Adam, revealing that his bloodline was not tainted by an angel incursion.

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. Genesis 6:9 (ESV)

Several translations on the literal end of the scale say that he was "perfect in his generations." For example,

These [are] births of Noah: Noah [is] a righteous man; perfect he hath been among his generations; with God hath Noah walked habitually. (Young's Literal Translation)

We notice that Noah is described as being both righteous and blameless (or perfect). Without a doubt he was a godly man, as evidenced by the comment that he walked with God, but no one suggests that he was actually perfect in the sense of being sinless.

The Hebrew word for "perfect" or "blameless" is *tamim* – without blemish, sound, healthful, without spot, unimpaired. It is the same word that is used to describe the physical characteristics of the animals that were qualified to be received as sacrifices.²³

The word "generations" is used to refer to genealogies²⁴ and it is plural, so our passage is not just saying that Noah was the most righteous man of those who were living on the earth during his time (although that is likely). It is drawing attention to who was descended from

²² Hamp, Douglas. *Corrupting the Image*, Crane, MO: Defender Publishing, 2006. 91.

²³ *The Companion Bible Appendixes*, page 28: "The Heb. word *tamim* means *without blemish*, and is the technical word for bodily and physical perfection, and, not *moral*. Hence it is used of animals of *sacrificial purity*. It is rendered *without blemish* in Ex. 12.5; 29.1; Lev. 1.3,10; 3.1,6; 4.3,23,28,32; 5.12,18; 6.6; 9.2,3; 14.10; 22.19; 23.12,18; Num. 6.14; 28.19,31; 29.2,8,13,20,23,29,32,36; Ezek. 43.22,23,25; 45.18,23; 46.4,6,13."

Without spot: Num. 19.2; 28.3,9,11; 29.17,26. *Undefiled*: Ps. 119.1. This shows that Gen. 6.9 does not speak of Noah's moral perfection . . ."

²⁴ The word for "generations" is *toledoth* or תולדות. When you look up the different usages, it quickly becomes obvious that it is always used in the context of genealogies.

whom. Granted, this does not prove the angel view (Noah's genealogy is important to all of the views), but it is certainly interesting to consider in light of the idea that we are talking about humanity being corrupted by different DNA. In no way can anyone claim that the Messiah—Eve's ultimate Seed—was the son of any spiritual being besides Yahweh.

Clearly a Rebellion

Whether or not the sexual relations between divine beings and human women was consensual, this was clearly a sin in the eyes of God.

And the angels who did not keep their own place, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great Day. Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as *them* indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. Jude verses 6-7 (New Revised Standard)²⁵

Because of gender and number agreement, "them" must refer back to the angels, not the cities. Jude is linking the angelic sin to a sexual sin. In other words, Sodom and Gomorrah sinned like the angels sinned. The word for "them" and the word for "angels" are both in the masculine plural. The word for "cities" is a grammatical feminine, so it can't be saying merely that the surrounding cities were sexually immoral like Sodom and Gomorrah. Jude is telling us that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, along with the surrounding cities, engaged in sexual immorality and the pursuit of unnatural lust (sometimes translated "strange flesh"), just like the angels who did not stay where they belonged and gave up their immortal bodies.^{26,27}

The Offspring of These Unions

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. Genesis 6:4

²⁵ To be fair, I want to point out that I used a different translation here that makes the thing I'm trying to say more clear. It's not a good practice to pick the translation that says what you want it to say, but sometimes it's good to consult them to affirm a legitimate word usage. I could have broken down the grammar further here, but it's sufficient just to show it to you in a different translation.

²⁶ Heiser, Michael. "The Angel View Genesis 6 Giants," 12 August 2015. Because he used the New Revised Standard in his explanation, I followed suit.

²⁷ "This verse begins with *hos*, an adverb of comparison having meanings of 'in the same manner as, after the fashion of, as, just as.' Here it introduces a comparison showing a likeness between the angels of verse 6 and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha (sic.) of this verse. But the likeness between them lies deeper than the fact that both were guilty of committing sin. It extends to the fact that both were guilty of the same identical sin. The punctuation of the A.V. [KJV] is misleading, as an examination of Greek text discloses. The A.V. punctuation gives the reader the impression that Sodom and Gomorrha (sic.) committed fornication and that the cities about them committed fornication in like manner to the two cities named. . . . The words 'in like manner' are related to the verbal forms, 'giving themselves over to fornication' and 'going after strange flesh.' In addition to all this, the Greek text has *toutois*, 'to these.' Thus, the translation should read, 'just as Sodom and Gomorrha (sic.) and the cities about them, in like manner to these, having given themselves over to fornication and having gone after strange flesh.' The sense of the entire passage (vv.6, 7) is that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha (sic.) and the cities about them, in like manner to these (the angels), have given themselves over to fornication and have gone after strange flesh. That means that the sin of the fallen angels was fornication." Wuest, Kenneth S. *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, Vol. II. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980. 241-242.

The sons of God were the fathers of the original Nephilim. Even according to the view that sees them as half god and half man, these Nephilim are not considered to be divine or immortal. They are called mighty men, or *gibborim*—a word that is used of regular humans sometimes. They were considered to be people.²⁸

We will see that they seem to have been very *large, ferocious* people, though! Although many scholars promote the translation “fallen ones” for the Hebrew word *nephilim* because this appears to support the notion that they were fallen angels, it is probably not the correct meaning. The Aramaic word is very close, and it clearly means “giants.”²⁹ The Septuagint translators used the Greek word *gigantes*, which refers to “one of a race of divine but savage and monstrous beings.”³⁰

A curious example in the animal kingdom may lend some understanding as to how the Nephilim may have grown to be giants, for those of us whose minds question such things! The cross between a lion father with a tiger mother produces a “liger.” (It does not usually happen unless humans introduce the species to each other, as in a zoo.) Interestingly, the gene that inhibits growth in tigers is found in the male, but in lions it is found in the female, which means that the offspring of a male lion and female tiger do not have the gene that switches off body growth at maturity. Ligers grow very quickly and they get to be huge compared to either of their parents.³¹ This may help explain how the Nephilim came to be giants. They could have been born the same size as normal human babies, but continued growing because they did not have the gene to stop their growth. Those who were born earlier and lived the longer lifespans that were common before the Flood could have grown larger than those who were born closer to the Flood.

Giants after the Flood

The Nephilim were clearly on the earth before the Flood, but Genesis 6:4 tells us they were also there “afterward.” Most scholars agree that this refers to their reappearance after the Flood. We simply are not told how there came to be Nephilim on earth after the Flood, but ideas abound. See Supplemental Notes for some possibilities.

One way or another, we find references to huge, powerful people hundreds of years after the Flood when the Israelites came into the Promised Land.

And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there... And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them. Numbers 13:22, 28, 33

The Emim formerly lived there, a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim. Deuteronomy 2:10-11

And Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua devoted them to destruction with their cities. There was none of the Anakim

²⁸ Joshua 14:15 mentions Arba, who was the greatest *man* among the Anakim (a Nephilim tribe).

²⁹ Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, 105-107.

³⁰ Online Etymology Dictionary. <http://www.etymonline.com/>

³¹ “Ligers.” *Know Your Cat*. www.knowyourcat.info/lib/liger.htm

left in the land of the people of Israel. Only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod did some remain. Joshua 11:21-22

And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was [over nine feet]. He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was [about 125 pounds]. And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed [about 15 pounds] of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him. I Samuel 17:4-7

Time does not allow us to examine all the different names we see here, but we can see that there were very large people in Canaan and that the Biblical authors were familiar with the ancestry of the different people groups.³² The presence of Nephilim in Numbers 13 was one of the reasons (arguably the *primary* reason) the spies convinced the rest of the Israelites that it would be impossible to conquer the Promised Land.

What would be the enemy's purpose for planting Nephilim in the Land?

When God makes a promise, you can count on His enemies to oppose it.

When the Israelites eventually came back after wandering for 40 years, their assigned task was to confront those that Satan had placed there in order to prevent God from keeping His promises. God required the Israelites to conquer and destroy many different armies, but a few times He even demanded that they kill every last man, woman, child, and animal. Although God's justice and sovereignty give Him every right to do as He pleases without giving us explanations, it is likely that those who were to be completely annihilated would have tormented and/or corrupted the bloodline of His people if they were allowed to remain.

All throughout the Bible (including the Old Testament), we see instances of God's delight in showing mercy. Often, though, His mercy towards one is made possible by His judgment against another.³³ For example, we look forward to the day that Satan is judged so that we can be free of his influence on our lives, which will be a great mercy to us! In the same way, God's judgment on these people groups was a mercy to His people, as it allowed them to be protected and preserved so they could be the vehicle through which God kept His promise to Eve. Frankly, this is true whether some of these groups carried Nephilim DNA or not, as all were engaging in heinous pagan practices and deserved judgment. We can take it even a step further and say that all of them deserved judgment even if they were only committing "mild" sins. God's judgment should not be the thing that shocks us... it should astound us that God ever shows mercy at all, and that He does it so frequently!

³² See Hamp, *Corrupting the Image*, 144-145 for a chart that connects various passages of Scripture to the different names of groups and individuals. By considering the passages together (Numbers 13:33; 21:26; Deuteronomy 2:10-11; 2:20-21a; 3:11; 3:13; 4:47; Joshua 2:10; 2 Samuel 21:20; 1 Chronicles 20:5-6, 8) we can conclude that the following were Nephilim in Canaan: Anakim, Rephaim, Emim, Zamzummim, Og (King of Bashan), Bashan, Sihon (of the Amorites), Amorites, Goliath and his brothers.

³³ "Salvation and judgment balance one another. The reality of judgment should keep us from thinking of God in purely sentimental terms as though he were a grandfatherly buddy who just lets things go. The reality of salvation should likewise keep us from thinking of God as merely a terrifying, vengeful judge...Paradoxically, it is the reality of his terrifying judgment that is meant to send us fleeing to him." Hamilton, James, Jr. *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010. 57.

That said, there are times that God judges completely and severely, while other times He seems more patient or else uses forms of judgment that seem less drastic from our human perspective, such as handing people over to have their own way and experience the natural consequences of their sin (see **Romans 1**). God always has good reasons for the timing and severity of His judgment, and I believe that our understanding of the Nephilim phenomenon can give insight into why God did something so drastic as to send a Flood to destroy all flesh, and why He later commanded the Israelites to completely annihilate certain communities.³⁴

Understanding the trauma of Israel in Numbers 13 is essential to understanding the subsequent conquest accounts. Any Israelite or Jew living after the time of the completion of the Hebrew Bible would have processed the wars for the promised land in terms of this passage, since it connected Israel's survival as the people of Yahweh with the defeat of the Nephilim descendants.³⁵

Interestingly, the complete destruction of these groups was not accomplished by the time Joshua died. The Anakim, Rephaim, Emim, and Zamzummim maintained strongholds in the Golan Heights, Hebron, and the Gaza Strip. These places became part of Philistia, and we later see Goliath emerging from this region to terrorize God's people.

I do not believe it is a coincidence that good old Caleb (one of only two faithful men that survived the forty years of wandering and were permitted to enter the Promised Land) specifically requested Hebron as his inheritance when it was time for the Land to be allotted to tribes and clans.

"I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. So now give me this hill country of which the Lord spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the Lord said." Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron to Caleb...for an inheritance...because he wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel. Joshua 14:10-15

Caleb had never been afraid of those Nephilim, and near the end of his life he showed that he was still aligned with God's purposes to destroy them! As an old man, he requested to be assigned to one of the places where the Anakim remained so he could finish the job. Hebron later became a significant region in the life of King David (2 Samuel 2:1) and in God's ultimate plan.

³⁴ The particular wording (lemma *kharam*) used in the annihilation accounts "is used only of assaults in cities or locales that overlap with giant clan population clusters." Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, 205. Certainly other non-Nephilim people were killed by the Israelites in the conquest, but the rationale for total annihilation was specifically the elimination of the descendants of the Nephilim. "Ridding the land of these bloodlines was the motivation." Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, 211.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

A New Idea?

I have demonstrated that the “angel view” is consistent with Scripture, yet you may still be struggling with it because it is an idea you have never heard before. I want to assure you that I do not bring a topic like this to your attention just to be sensational, but because I believe it is true and I believe the truth has been hidden. When truth about the enemy and his tactics gets hidden, he is able to operate in stealth because people remain unaware of his activity. It may serve the enemy’s purposes to bury the truth about what happened in Genesis 6. When we consider it absurd that angels procreated with humans, we tend to relegate Satan’s activity only to mind games and temptations (which he certainly also takes part in) and to diminish his actual physical interaction with our world so that we can’t see it for what it is. In many ways the Church seems to have stripped the supernatural out of the Bible, softening those stories or “demythologizing” them and making them symbolic so that we do not have to seem so strange to others for believing them.

The story of Genesis 6 was not always viewed as merely an interaction between two groups of humans, as it is largely seen today. Until the latter half of the third century A.D. nearly all Jewish and Christian texts and commentaries communicate the understanding that the Nephilim of Genesis 6:1-4 were the offspring of a divine/human sexual union, and that these beings were giants.³⁶ Traditional rabbinical literature supported the view, and so do the other oldest sources. Just because it is the oldest view on record does not make it true, of course, but when the evidence is stacked up to consider how and when the other views came to the forefront, it is quite logical to conclude that the older sources were reporting the thing that had actually happened. Let’s take a look at a few.

1 Enoch

Again, this source cannot be directly attributed to Enoch because the oldest manuscript we have was not written until two hundred years before Christ. It cannot be taken as inspired Scripture because it did not pass the criteria to be included in the canon. Jude quotes it, however, evidencing that he and his readers were familiar with the edition of this written work that existed in his time. Ten fragments were found in Qumran with the Dead Sea Scrolls, indicating a level of respect for it in the Qumran community. *1 Enoch* gives a great deal of detail about the time before the Flood, including this sampling of tidbits:

- The sons of God who married the daughters of man are called Watchers. (15:9)
- The number of Watchers who sinned in this way was two hundred. (6:6)
- Some fragments of *1 Enoch* give names for the giants. When a giant was killed (by flood, cannibalism, an archangel, etc.), only the human side died. The Watcher part lived on and came out of the body.

³⁶ I have found just two exceptions, one of which is a Midrash (Jewish commentary): Genesis Rabbah 26:5 translated into English says, “That the sons of the nobles saw the daughters of man when they were beautifying themselves, and they took for themselves wives from whomever they chose.” This is possibly based on the *Book of Jashar*, which says in 4:18 that “their judges and rulers went to the daughters of men and took their wives by force from their husbands according to their choice,” but then goes on to describe how men were mingling different animal species together to provoke the Lord. Many people who write in support of the angel view actually quote *Jashar* to make their case, so I find it to be interesting but contradictory. Dr. Heiser does not believe *Jashar* to be an authentic ancient document, unlike *1 Enoch*. If he is correct, then Genesis Rabbah is the only ancient source I have seen that assumes anything other than the angel view.

- The Watcher demons (spirits of Nephilim) can assume many forms.
- They want to be worshipped. They solicit and receive sacrifice as gods.
- According to 1 Enoch 8, the Watchers taught humans about weaponry, metals, jewelry, herbal medicine, cosmetics, precious stones, dyes, enchantments, astrology, astronomy, and meteorology.
- The offspring of the Watchers (the Nephilim giants) began to sin against the birds, beasts, reptiles, fish... devour each others' flesh and drink their blood.³⁷ 1 Enoch 7:4

To clarify the third point, Enoch taught that demons are not the fallen angels themselves, but their offspring.

And now, the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, and on the earth shall be their dwelling. Evil spirits have proceeded from their bodies; because they are born from men and from the holy Watchers is their beginning and primal origin; they shall be evil spirits on earth, and evil spirits shall they be called... And the spirits of the giants afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth, and cause trouble: they take no food, but nevertheless hunger and thirst, and cause offenses. And these spirits shall rise up against the children of men and against the women, because they have proceeded from them. (1 Enoch 15: 18-21)

I think this provides the best available explanation for where demons come from and why they inhabit people's bodies. Many older commentaries agree.

When Almighty God, to beautify the nature of the world, willed that earth should be visited by angels, when they were sent down they despised His laws. Such was the beauty of women, that it turned them aside; so that, being contaminated, they could not return to heaven. Rebels from God, they uttered words against Him. Then the Highest uttered His judgment against them; and from their seed giants are said to have been born. [...] But the Almighty, because they were of an evil seed, did not approve that, when dead, they should be brought back from death. Whence wandering they now subvert many bodies, and it is such as these especially that ye this day worship and pray to as gods.³⁸

In our own time, several teachers have speculated that the reason the spirits of the Nephilim have nowhere to go is because God did not create those spirits. They seek to find a place to rest.

“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And

³⁷ If this was the behavior of the Nephilim before the Flood and the ones afterwards behaved similarly, perhaps that could help us understand why the Israelites were commanded to kill every animal of those communities. They were somehow sinning against animals.

³⁸ *The Instructions of Commodianus in Favor of Christian Discipline. Against the Gods of the Heathens*, Section III, by Commodianus. He was a Christian Latin poet from about AD 250.

when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first.” Luke 11:24-26

This explanation of the origin of demons also gives a possible reason for why some demons are more evil than others, just as Jesus states here. The first generation of Nephilim would have been half angel and half human. The second would have been only one fourth angel. This could very well have something to do with the hierarchy or different categories of enemies that we find in the spirit world (Ephesians 6:12). It also gives a likely reason for why we see demons constantly seeking to inhabit people (or even animals for a short time, as in the case of the demoniac in Mark 5 that begged to be allowed to enter a herd of pigs after they were forced to leave a man’s body).

Septuagint

The Septuagint translators didn’t always get it right, but these scholars from the third century BC clearly had an opinion about Genesis 6. This is the Greek version of the Old Testament that would have been circulating among the apostolic churches. They clearly translated the word *nephilim* as *gigantes*, or giants. *Gigantes* at that time in classical Greek literature commonly referred to creatures that were half god and half man.

If the translators of the Septuagint didn’t want us to think about demigods or men of enormous stature, they sure picked the wrong word! ... Considering the exposure those Alexandrian Jews must certainly have had to Greek literature and the numerous stories of giants, we would be completely ignoring their testimony if we were to understand the word as anything other than creatures who were hybrids of fallen angels and humans—who were also of colossal stature.³⁹

Josephus

Much of what we know about the fall of Jerusalem and Jewish history prior to the first century comes from Josephus. Note that he acknowledges the initial righteousness of Seth’s descendants but never connects the sons of God to the line of Seth, instead stating very clearly that Seth’s descendants became wicked and that angels were the ones who begat children with human women. Here’s one short excerpt (see Supplemental Notes for more):

... for many angels* of God accompanied with women and begat sons that proved unjust, and despisers of all that was good...⁴⁰

Early Church Fathers

Many respected early church fathers taught the angel view, including Philo of Alexandria (c.20 BC-c.AD 50, Justin Martyr (100-165 AD), Irenaeus (c. AD 202), Athenagoras (2nd Century),

³⁹ Hamp, *Corrupting the Image*, 142.

⁴⁰ *The Antiquities of the Jews*, translated by William Whitson (1667-1752), p. 32, bk. 1, ch. 3, §§72-74. The asterisk* by “angels” directs the reader to Whitson’s footnote: “This notion, that the fallen angels were, in some sense, the fathers of the old giants, was the constant opinion of antiquity.”

Tertullian (c. 160-225 AD), Lactantius (c. 240-320 AD), Ambrose (c. 340-397 AD), and Jerome (c. 345-420).⁴¹ These men expressed some ideas that were not correct, of course, but their commentaries lend support to the claim that Genesis 6 was generally understood up to this point to be a mingling of angels and humans.

Philo is a particularly interesting example. He was a Jewish philosopher from the time of Christ whose goal was to harmonize the Scriptures with Greek philosophy. The use of allegory was his primary method of harmonization. If anyone were going to try to allegorize the meaning behind the sons of God and the resulting giants, it would have been Philo! Instead, he took a completely literal approach to this event.

“And when the angels of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful, they took unto themselves wives of all of whom they chose.” [Gen 6:2] Those beings, whom other philosophers call demons, Moses usually calls angels; and they are souls hovering in the air.⁴²

Other Sources

I’ve included quotations from even more sources in the Supplemental Notes: Book of the Giants, Book of Jubilees, a fragment from Qumran scroll IQ23, and one from the Genesis Apocryphon. All of these demonstrate clearly that the angel view was the common understanding of antiquity, and all of these are Jewish in origin. There are several others that say roughly the same things.

It is important to note, however, that the belief in angelic beings procreating with humans is embodied in the mythology of many very old non-Jewish cultures.⁴³ This is what we would expect if it actually happened. If it did not happen, it is curious that so many peoples from around the globe at various times throughout history all had the same idea, including the Sumerians⁴⁴, Assyrians, Egyptians, Incans, Mayans, Persians, Greeks, Indians, Bolivians, Native Americans, and the people of the South Sea Islands.

Archaeological Evidence

There is no shortage of material on the internet to provide archaeological “evidence” of giants and/or Nephilim. Surely many, if not most, are fraudulent. My own observation is that it would serve the enemy well to obfuscate this issue! By creating forgeries, the entire landscape is muddied so that it’s impossible for the average person to know what to believe. This causes

⁴¹ See <http://midwestapologetics.org/blog/?p=458> “The Sons of God and the Nephilim—Part 5” by Tim Chaffey (*Midwest Apologetics*) to view a chart that tells the source for each of these writings. It includes many other individuals from all positions even up to the present day, indicating which view they support(ed) and the source in which they expressed their ideas.

⁴² Philo, *On the Giants*, II, 6.

⁴³ Heiser, Michael. “The Angel View Genesis 6 Giants,” 12 August 2015.

⁴⁴ I will not take space to give examples from each region, but Sumer is particularly important because it is in Mesopotamia, where civilization restarted after the Flood. Their flood myth includes the story of the *apkallus* (sages), who were divine beings before the Flood that produced offspring that were two-thirds *apkallu* and one-third human. Another Mesopotamian variation gets so specific that it records the banishment of the *apkallus* to deep within the earth—exactly as Jude and Peter describe. This indicates that the New Testament writers were aware of these works and were confirming the true parts of the stories.

us to think the entire notion of giant skeletons is nonsense—especially if we’ve been duped by a hoax that was later debunked. Along with stories of the discovery of giant artifacts, we often read dramatic reports of “officials” coming and whisking away the evidence (usually storing it away in the basement of the Smithsonian, like Indiana Jones’ ark gathering dust in a warehouse). These stories naturally lead to scathing comments about the “idiot Christians” who would believe giants existed on the earth just because the Bible says so.

While I have no personal eyewitness account to lend credibility to tales of discovery, I do see a motive for covering up the evidence of giants. For one thing, the Bible *does* say there were giants, so actual discoveries of giant bones would support the Biblical account. Furthermore, it would refute the evolutionary model, which claims that humans are becoming larger and smarter as time progresses, rather than smaller and dumber. Some claim that these giant skeletons have been found with dinosaur skeletons, neither of which would be able to grow so large or move around with those body sizes in our post-Flood climate (which lends support to the Biblical Flood account and undermines evolution). I find it curious that these types of reports no longer appeared in newspapers from about the 1950’s, just as the theory of evolution began to be so heavily pushed on the public.

While I do not wish to throw my hat in the ring behind any particular claim or discovery, it makes sense to me that these kinds of things would no longer be reported on if/when they are found. Therefore, the lack of giant skeletons in our museums cannot be used as evidence against their existence. I do urge caution against relying on skeletons or legends as the foundation of what one believes about what was happening in Genesis 6. It is more likely than not that any particular “find” or tale will have been embellished or even entirely fabricated. Besides that, it does not refute the supernatural view of Genesis if no giant skeletons exist at all. So much time has gone by and these cultures did not mummify their dead, so it’s not likely that skeletons would remain to be found.

Why does any of this even matter?

My clear conclusion after analyzing all of the evidence is that the sons of God were beings that originated in the spirit world and interacted with the material world. The stated purpose was that they were attracted to human women,⁴⁵ yet a deeper underlying motive was to prevent God from keeping His promise to send a Redeemer through Eve’s physical bloodline.

For me, finding out the truth of a matter and gaining a better understanding of a difficult passage of Scripture is enough of a reason to spend time exploring this topic. It’s not something we would want to have as our primary focus (potentially eclipsing the larger picture of the gospel) but everything in the Bible is there for a purpose and it can be exhilarating to mine for details about less familiar subjects.

I think there are more important reasons to explore this topic, however, that go beyond the mere thrill of discovery. While they may not be obvious at first glance, the implications of my

⁴⁵ Even this leaves room for debate, as many interpret the phrase “they saw that the daughters of men were fair” to be “they saw that the daughters of men were *fit extensions*,” indicating their desire to mingle their seed into the human race. The Hebrew word for “fair” (*towb* or טוב) is by no means limited to appearance and does leave room for this interpretation. The Hebrew Interlinear Bible defines *towb* as “good ones.”

conclusions will become more and more apparent as you begin to look at the world around you through this lens.

Worldview

For one thing, as we seek to form a coherent worldview that takes into account all of our experiences and observations, we find that the Bible is the only source that can accurately explain what is going on. For example, a secular world view says that humans are basically good and that evolution is moving us toward increasing complexity, but we find in reality that tiny toddlers are inclined toward sin and that society and even the human genome are breaking down, not evolving. Reality is in line with how the Bible describes human depravity and the effects of the Curse.

Our modern world (and even the Church, at times) is directly influenced by Enlightenment thinking, which attempts to surgically remove all traces of the supernatural from our approach to science. Yet the Bible states clearly that the spirit world interacts with the physical world, so we should take this into account when we do science instead of starting with the assumption that everything must be explained apart from the supernatural.

This comes into play in relation to the sons of God and the Nephilim in a variety of ways. Consider some of the massive mysterious structures of the world, for example (the Pyramids, Stonehenge, or the Baalbek Temple), the construction methods of which are hotly debated. Because these things are not readily explainable, we see the growing acceptance of the "Ancient Astronaut" view that aliens have visited our planet on numerous occasions to help humanity. While none of us were there to observe how these feats were actually accomplished, the Biblical account of Genesis 6 and the resulting giants would very easily explain such things when we consider the possibility that there were huge strong men on earth. I do believe that most engineering feats can be explained in other ways, but I flatly reject the popular "we can't explain it so it must have been aliens" trend that we're seeing become more prevalent.

The bottom line here is that with all the current television programs about the "mysteries" of the world, let us always keep in mind that a coherent Biblical world view allows for things that are unacceptable to modern science, such as demons and giants and angels that do physical things in the material world.

Understanding the Bible

The "angel" view helps us understand some bigger-picture themes and even smaller details about the Bible, too, that are otherwise left unanswered.

- One major theme of the Bible is the conflict between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman as God seeks to restore the fellowship he had with humans in Eden. The story recorded in Genesis 6 provides an important level of understanding about how progress toward that end was impeded.
- As I mentioned earlier, it gives us a plausible explanation for where demons came from, how they are different from other powerful evil forces (such as the "Prince of Persia" mentioned in Daniel), and how some can be more evil than others. When we view demons as the roaming spirits of forbidden unions, we begin to recognize their

limitations. This will help as we craft a world view that places God all by Himself at the top over creatures that are completely “other.”

- It helps us understand why and how we find giants in Canaan, such as Og and Goliath. Along with that, it gives some background as to why God may have commanded that certain people groups (including women, children, and animals) were completely destroyed, while others who participated in equally pagan practices (including Israel and Judah themselves eventually) were merely forced into captivity.⁴⁶
- For that matter, the presence of hybrid Nephilim gives a much better explanation for the need for the “reset” that the Flood provided. Of course God is perfectly just and we will not always understand His ways, yet the very same sins that are said to be the problems in the Sethite and Royal views (mixing of the godly and ungodly, polygamy, or the nobility taking other people’s wives for themselves) have happened many other times—even in Israel’s own history—yet God did not judge them so severely. Understanding the concept of the polluted bloodline reveals that God was actually showing mercy to Noah and his family while protecting the existence of the human race.
- Even some New Testament passages make much more sense when we know that angels are capable of procreating with humans.

That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. 1 Corinthians 11:10

What? What do the angels have to do with a woman and authority? Does it make any difference when we consider that angels were once attracted to human women and took them as their wives? I believe Paul is telling the Corinthians here that it’s very important to get this issue of authority right because it has unseen implications that affect even the spirit realm. Without the knowledge of what was happening in Genesis 6, we are left with only question marks about why Paul brings the angels into this discussion. I still have some question marks, but now I have a few exclamation marks to go with them!

- Let’s not forget about our **1 Peter 2** and **Jude** passages regarding the sin of the angels, in which the authors assumed their readers knew what they were talking about. These are much better understood in light of the angel view.

Knowing the Enemy

One of the main reasons I think it’s worthwhile to spend a little time coming to an understanding of this topic is because it seems foolish to remain ignorant if God’s enemies are capable of such a thing. Although it makes us uncomfortable, we should acknowledge that a great deal of evidence points in this direction. Even if you still disagree with me, I think by now it should be difficult to be dogmatically against the angel view. Suppose for a moment that it is correct. Don’t we help the enemy’s cause by covering this up and behaving as though he cannot do this? Let’s not allow him to operate in stealth mode in this area!

⁴⁶ “Understanding the trauma of Israel in Numbers 13 is essential to understanding the subsequent conquest accounts. Any Israelite or Jew living after the time of the completion of the Hebrew Bible would have processed the wars for the promised land in terms of this passage, since it connected Israel’s survival as the people of Yahweh with the defeat of the Nephilim descendants.” Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, 184.

As we proceed through *Choose You This Day*, we will see that the “mixing of kinds” will interrelate with many other activities that we see Satan and his forces doing in our world today, which is the reason it was necessary for us to lay the groundwork in this lesson. As we look into the alien agenda, the transhumanist movement, and various topics related to music, movies, and the occult, this theme will resurface again and again. Even if one concludes that God’s enemies cannot mingle their seed with that of humans, he or she at the very least needs to acknowledge that this idea is heavily represented in the entertainment industry so we should learn to recognize it. The fact that it is a ubiquitous theme of music videos, blockbuster movies, and even children’s books ought to give us pause. I, for one, view the modern fascination with demigods, sentient robotic creatures, and the mixing of one species with another as ancient ideas with a 21st Century twist.

Prophetic Implications

A final reason I think it is important to study this topic is because it has significant implications when it comes to how we interpret prophecy and what we believe God’s enemies will be (or currently are) doing in the last days.

Jesus said that His return would come at a time when things are “as it was in the days of Noah” (**Matthew 24:37**). I have seen many prophecy teachers get carried away with this phrase and miss the stated point of the reference, which is simply that life will be going on and everything will seem ordinary when people are surprised by sudden judgment coming upon them. However, I don’t think it’s best to ignore the unique conditions of the world during Noah’s time, since Jesus did get specific and he could have used other examples to make his point (Belshazzar, for one, was partying when judgment came upon him in **Daniel 5**). While I do not think Jesus’ reference can be used as proof that there will be another attempt at hybridization in the end times, we will be exploring some evidence that this is indeed the case. We will find that the devil doesn’t have a limitless bag of tricks, but instead he tends to repackage and reuse old ideas. It would be unlike him *not* to try to do this again. It is my goal to put the devil and his demons in their proper place so we will not be alarmed as we see what is happening in our world.