A RESPONSE TO CHUCK MISSLER
Who Are the Sons of God in Genesis 6? Part 1

By

Thomas A. Howe, Ph.D.
Professor of Bible and Biblical Languages
Southern Evangelical Seminary

©Copyright 2004
This article and parts thereof may not be reproduced in any form, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise) without prior written permission of the author, except as provided by United States of America copyright law.
A RESPONSE TO CHUCK MISSLER
Who Are The Sons of God in Genesis 6? Part 1

Recently I published an article in the Christian Research Journal titled, “Who Are the Sons of God in Genesis 6?” This article started as an examination of the claims of Church Missler that are presented in his book, Chuck Missler, Learn the Bible in 24 Hours (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002), and on his web site, http://www.khouse.org/articles/prophetic/960101-43.html. Due to the space constraints, much of the reasoning and exegesis behind this article could not be published, so I present here the larger content.

The Passage In Question

Genesis 6:2-4

1 “And it was when the man began to multiply upon the face of the ground, that sons they brought forth to themselves.
2 And the sons of the God saw the daughters of the man that good, behold they took to them women from all whom they chose.
3 And the Lord said, ‘My Spirit will not reside in man forever, for also he is flesh, and his days will be one hundred and twenty years.’
4 The fallen ones were in the land in those days and also after this when the sons of the God came into the daughters of the man, and they bore to them; these are the warriors from ancient time, men of the name.”
Response to Missler

I have attempted to go through Missler’s claims in the order they have been presented in his book and on his web site, so each numbered paragraph presents a particular claim by Missler with observations and comments following.

1. Missler begins his exposition with the statement, “The understanding of this passage [Gen. 6:1-2] hangs on the Hebrew term that has been translated ‘sons of God,’ Bene HaElohim. In the Old Testament this term refers exclusively to angels.” Rather than demonstrate his point before asserting his conclusion, Missler states up front that he believes that the term “sons of God” exclusively refers to angels. Of course this is the very point that must be proven, not simply assumed.

2. As support for his claim, Missler turns to the Septuagint:

Perhaps’ our most authoritative source is the Greek translation of the Old Testament from the third century B.C., known as the Septuagint. Greek is a very precise language, and the seventy scholars who produced the Septuagint (a fancy word for seventy) help us understand the Hebrew from which it was translated. The Septuagint clearly translates this term ‘angels.’

There are several problems with these claims. First of all, Missler does not attempt to explain why he believes that “our most authoritative source is the Greek translation of the Old Testament.” It is not at all clear why the Greek translation should be considered our most authoritative source. What about the Hebrew text? Orthodoxy has long held that the Hebrew text is the inspired and authoritative text, not the Greek translation. Missler may, however, simply be proposing that the LXX is the most authoritative witness to the ancient form of the Hebrew text. However, even if this is what he intended to say, this in itself is problematic. The LXX has its own history of revision and transcription that has introduced variants. In fact the very passage under discussion contains a textual variant with reference to the very word, “angels,” to which Missler so confidently refers.

Karen Jobes and Moisés Silva point out that, “[Alfred] Rahlfs’s edition [of the Septuagint], in spite of its provisional character, has since [its completion] been regarded as the standard Septuagint text, even though for many books of the Bible it has now been superseded by individual volumes of the larger project, often referred to as ‘the Göttingen Septuagint.’” Contrary to Missler’s claim, Rahlf’s Septuagint does not read “angels”: ιδοντες δε οι νιοι του θεου . . .” (Now behold the

---


2 Ibid.

3 Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, Invitation to Septuagint (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 75.
sons of the God . . .” Rahlfs’s textual apparatus has the following information about this variant: “6 2 υἱῶν M] ἄγγελοι A.” The symbols indicate the following:

6 2 = this refers to the chapter and verse, chapter 6 verse 2.
υἱῶν M] = indicates that the Massoretic text uses the Hebrew equivalent to the Greek word υἱῶν, which means “sons.” The Hebrew word is בנים, b’ney.
ἀγγέλοι = this refers to the Greek word that occurs as a variant in certain LXX manuscripts.
A = this is the symbol for the Codex Alexandrinus, a fifth century A.D. uncial manuscript that contains all of the books of the Bible with only a few gaps. This is the manuscript in which the reading ἄγγελοι appears.
‘ = this symbol follows the symbol “A.” According to Rahlfs’s explanation, this symbol refers to a “Rescriptor, i.e. one who, in his correction, has so completely set aside the original text that it is no longer recognisable [sic].”

What the notation “A” tells us is that the manuscript that has the variant ἄγγελοι is clearly an alteration of the original reading of the LXX, which contained the word υἱῶν. So, quite contrary to Missler’s claim, the LXX does not “clearly translate the term as ‘angels.”” In fact, the LXX translates the term “sons.” But, even granting the reading ἄγγελοι does not guarantee the meaning “angels.” The Greek word ἄγγελοι can simply mean “messengers” and is sometimes used of human beings. James 2:25 states, “In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers [ἄγγελους] and sent them out by another way?” It would be a simple matter of going back to the Old Testament passage that recounts this event to discover that the individuals whom Rahab received were not angelic beings, but were men sent by Joshua to spy out the land.

Additionally, the Syriac, another ancient witness to the Hebrew Bible does not support Missler’s claim. The Syriac reads חָנִית: כָּמוֹךם “sons of God” as does the Hebrew text. Both ancient witnesses, the LXX and the Syriac, agree with the reading of the Hebrew text as we have it. Missler’s statements are incorrect at best and deceptive at worst.

3. Concerning the expression “daughters of mankind,” Missler says, “Another important phrase is ‘the daughters of men’ (benoth adam). They are the daughters of Adam, not just the daughters of Cain.” It is interesting that, although Missler accurately reports the earlier term, “‘sons of God, τέκνα Βεν Εŭλοῖμ,” he fails accurately to report this latter expression. The transliteration of the Hebrew expression “sons of God” that Missler gives accurately includes the definite article, Ha, (the) before the word “Elohim.” However, Missler neglects to include the definite article before the word “adam” in the later quote. Yet the Hebrew text reads, benoth HaAdam (בְּנוֹת חָא דָאָם). Interestingly, Missler’s confidence in the Septuagint text seems suddenly to wain. Although he calls

4Alfred Rahlfs, ed. Septuaginta (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), LXVII.
5Missler, 26.
upon the LXX to support his understanding of the expression “sons of God,” he conveniently neglects to report that the LXX translates the Hebrew text as, “the daughters of the men” (τῶν ἀνθρώπων ταῖς γυναικέστεραι). The LXX, which Missler claims is “the most authoritative source” does not translate the Hebrew word HaAdam as a proper name the way Missler would have it, but translates it with the generic noun “men.” Missler is quick to call upon the LXX when it appears to support his view, but he is unwilling to let his readers know when it contradicts his view.

Hebrew scholars generally recognize that in this context the word HaAdam should be translated “men,” not “Adam.” This being the case, Missler’s conclusion does not follow. If the daughters are daughters of “the men,” it remains to be proven whether this can be restricted to the descendants of Cain or broadened to indicate descendants of Adam generally. The point here is not that this disproves Missler’s claim. Rather, the point is that the text does not support Missler’s claim. Missler is simply making unsubstantiated assertions. He cannot simply stipulate that this is the correct understanding of the text, because the text does not support his claim. The text is ambiguous enough in this expression to go either way, and Missler has failed to demonstrate that his understanding is the correct one—or even a reasonable one given the textual evidence.

4. Once again Missler takes liberties with the text. He says, “The word ‘Nephilim’ means ‘the fallen ones.’ . . . These were the hybrids that resulted from the mischief between the fallen angels and human women.” Unfortunately for Missler’s assertion, the word Nephilim is never used in the Hebrew Scriptures to mean “hybrids.” From where does Missler get the notion that these were “hybrids”? Obviously he gets this from his belief that the sons of God were “fallen angels” who had sexual relations with women. But, since Missler has not demonstrated that his view is the correct one—he has merely asserted it—any evidence or conclusions he draws are questionable at best and simply wrong at worst.

In fact, there is a serious problem with taking the expression “sons of the God” to indicate fallen angels, as Missler would have it. Additionally there are some serious problems with the Angels view in general.

The “Angels” View

There is no doubt that the most widely held view is that the phrase refers to angels. Umberto Cassuto says, “The interpretation in the sense of angels is the oldest in the history of exegesis . . .” As early as 400 A.D. “The Book of the Watchers,” which forms the first 36 chapters of 1 Enoch, propagated what has become arguably the most popular understanding of this passage. 1 Enoch tells

6Ibid.

the story of how the “angels of heaven” saw the daughters of men and desired them, and they proposed to take wives for themselves from the sons of men. The text of Enoch reports the reluctance of Semyaz, their ruler, to take action lest his cohorts refuse to participate and he be left to act alone. Semyaz refers to the act that they propose as a “great sin.” Clearly the act of having sexual relations with human females was perceived by these “angels of heaven” to be a “great sin.” They bound themselves together with an oath and a curse that none would shrink back from performing the deed. The offspring produced by this union were, according to Enoch, “great giants.”

One way to address the question of whether this refers to angels is to discover whether the phrase is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. As we observed earlier, Missler rightly points out, “The understanding of this passage [Gen. 6:1-2] hangs on the Hebrew term that has been translated ‘sons of God,’ Bene HaElohim.” He goes on to assert, “In the Old Testament this term refers exclusively to angels.” Most advocates of the angels view, including Missler, refer to Job 1:6, 2:1, and 38:7 to support the claim that “sons of God” always means “angels.” Let’s look at these passages to see if this assertion is justified.

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

Job 2:1 “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 38:7 “When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

---


9Ibid., 6:3, Σεμιαζας.

10Ibid., αρχων αντων.

11Ibid., αμαρτης μεγαλης.

12Ibid., 7:2, γιγαντας μεγαλους.

13Missler, Learn the Bible in 24 Hours, 26.

14Ibid.
The parallelism in 38:7 calls into question the idea that the expression “sons of God” is a reference to angelic beings. The first part of the poetic line refers to “morning stars,” and the expression “sons of God” functions in poetic parallelism to this. This is most probably a more poetic or figurative reference to the heavenly bodies. At least it is not unambiguously a reference to angels. Since the expression here is itself controversial, it cannot be called upon to support any particular view. It seems clear, however, that the remaining passages of Job, 1:6 and 2:1, are indeed references to angelic beings.

On the strength of these related passages, Missler and other proponents of the Angels View declare that the expression “sons of God” is “consistently used in the Old Testament for angels, and it is never used of believers in the Old Testament.” But is this accurate? According to Waltke, “Human beings are called ‘sons of God’ in Hos. 1:10 . . . and divine kings in 2 Sam. 7:14 . . .” If Waltke’s note is accurate, it severely diminishes the strength of the support from Job for the Angels position. Hos. 1:10 says, “And in the place where it is said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ it will be said to them, ‘You are the sons of the living God.’” At the level of the English translation, it certainly seems to be the case that “sons of God” is used to refer to believers in the Old Testament. The critical phrase occurs at the very end of the verse; בֵּן אֵל instead of בְּנֵי אֵל. This passage uses the singular form of the word “God,” אֵל, rather than the plural form, הַלֹּהְם, which is used in Gen. 6:2. But these two forms are frequently used interchangeably, and there is no doubt that both passages refer to the God of Israel, the God of heaven and earth.

So, even though the passages in Job refer to angels, it is not true that this expression is used exclusively of angels. Of course this does not prove that Gen. 6:2 cannot be a reference to angels. But it does show that it is possible to take the expression “sons of God” as a reference to human beings. That being the case, we need to look more closely at the Angels position. We will consider version 1a, the Fallen Angels view, and then version 1b, the Heavenly Angels view.

Sons of God as Fallen Angels

As we pointed out above, the expression “sons of God” is certainly used in two passages in Job to refer to angels. One interpreter specifically identifies the “sons of God” as fallen angels when he says, “These [Nephilim] were the hybrids that resulted from the mischief between the fallen angels and human women.” But, do the passages in Job support this claim? A closer examination of the Job passages reveals that there is nothing in these verses that would lead one to conclude that “sons of God” refers to fallen angels. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case. Both passages

15Missler, “Mischievous Angels or Sethites?” http://www.khouse.org/articles/biblestudy/19970801-110.html


17Missler, Learn the Bible, 26.
describe the scene in which the “sons of God” present themselves before the Lord. But, there is someone who comes in among them. The expression, “and the Satan came in the midst of them,” is exactly the same in 1:6 and 2:1. The statement implies that the Satan was not one of the sons of God, but came in among them when they came to present themselves before the Lord. This would seem to indicate that the sons of God in Job are not fallen angels, but heavenly angels. It becomes very problematic, then, to assume that the references in Job support the view that the sons of God in Genesis 6 are “fallen angels.” In fact, it would seem to be contrary to the sense of the expression “sons of God” to think that it would be used of fallen angels.

It is not at all clear that the use of the expression “sons of God” in Job offers any support for understanding Gen. 6:2 to refer to fallen angels. If Job offers any support for understanding Genesis, it would seem to indicate that the expression “sons of God” should be taken to refer to angels of heaven rather than fallen angels. In fact, the expression “sons of God” is never used in any other passage of the Old or New Testaments to refer either to fallen angels.

Of course this does not prove that 6:2 cannot refer to angels in general or fallen angels in particular. What it does show, however, is that one cannot simply assume that because a word or phrase is used to mean a certain thing in other passages that it must be understood this way in every passage. Even though “sons of God” is never used of fallen angels does not mean it could not possibly mean this in Gen. 6:2. It is possible that a word or phrase can mean one thing in a single passage even though all other passages use it differently. But, what this does show is that the interpreter cannot rest his interpretation on unproven assumptions. If an interpreter wants to argue that “sons of God” in Gen. 6:2 means “fallen angels,” he must demonstrate this by convincing arguments from the context of Genesis. He must not simply assume that its use in other passages secures its meaning in every passage. Proponents of the Angels View particularly fall victim to this criticism because they often assume that since it means “angels” in Job, it must mean “fallen angels” in Genesis. Although this is conceivable, given the evidence it is highly improbable. And, after looking at the evidence, it seems to be the case that taking “sons of God” to mean “fallen angels” has no support from Job or anywhere else.

Sons of God as Heavenly Angels

The second version of the Angels view is that “sons of God” is a reference to unfallen or heavenly angels. Here the passages in Job would seem to lend support. But, there are some unproven assumptions that plague this view as well. Every commentator who proposes the Heavenly Angels view simply assumes that a sexual relation between angels and human females is somehow sinful. But on what do they base this assumption? Many commentators refer to Jude 6-7 to support this idea: “And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.” From
this passage interpreters conclude, “Jude made an allusion to these events in Genesis 6 and clearly he was writing about angels who, for whatever reason, went after ‘strange flesh.’”\(^{18}\)

The problem with such a conclusion is that it assumes what it must prove. One can see Jude’s statement as an “allusion” to Genesis 6 only if he already accepts the Angels View of Genesis 6. If Genesis 6 is interpreted differently, say to refer to the line of Seth, then Jude can no longer be seen as an allusion to it. So, in order to interpret Jude as providing support for the Angels View, one must assume that his interpretation of Genesis 6 is correct. But this is circular. This is a case of using the interpretation of Genesis 6 to understand Jude, and then using Jude as support for his interpretation of Genesis 6.

In fact, there are no compelling reasons to take Jude as referring to Genesis 6. The analogy between Sodom-Gomorrah and the angels is that each group left its proper abode. In the way humans left their proper sexual abode, so angels left their proper spiritual abode. This could be an allusion to the rebellion of angels against God who set them in their proper place. Human sexual relations are often used as symbolic of one’s dedication to God. In Hosea Israel is depicted as an adulterous wife. So the immorality of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah makes a fitting analogy to the angels who rebelled against God rather than remain His faithful servants. This is at least as reasonable an interpretation as the one proposed in the Angels View. This does not necessarily prove that these interpreters are wrong, but it does bring out into the open their unproven assumptions.

A second serious problem with the Heavenly Angels version of the Angels view is that commentators simply assume that angels can have sexual relations with human women. As Bruce Waltke points out, “This interpretation also contradicts Jesus’ statement that angels do not marry (Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25). It is one thing for angels to eat and drink (see Gen. 19:1-3), but quite another to marry and reproduce.”\(^{19}\) In Matt. 22:30, in response to a challenge by the Sadducees, Jesus said, “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.” Some respond to this argument by making Jesus refer only to the marriage contract, not to the marriage bed. But this would make Jesus’ statement nonsensical in its own context. Jesus is responding to the question about a woman who has had seven husbands, but had no children. The question is about having a marital relation issuing in children. Jesus’ response must be taken in this light or it makes no sense. So understood, Jesus clearly denies that heavenly angels can have sexual relations.

Another response to this is to point out that Jesus is referring to angels in heaven, but Genesis 6 is referring to fallen angels. But, this maneuver will not work either. We have already shown that it is highly unlikely that the expression “sons of God” would be used to refer to fallen angels. Secondly, the traditional view holds that these angels fell because they had forbidden sexual relations with human females. But, if they were unfallen prior to their sinful act, then they must have been heavenly angels. But, if they were heavenly angels, according to what Jesus said, they cannot have sexual relations. So, as heavenly angels they could not commit the very act that is supposed to have caused them to fall. Besides this, the advocates of this view simply assume that sexual relations

\(^{18}\)Missler, *Learn the Bible*, 27.

\(^{19}\)Waltke, *Genesis*, 116.
between heavenly angels and human females is forbidden. No commentator has attempted to prove this assumption.

5. Concerning the meaning of the expression “the mighty ones,” the HaGibborim,” Missler says, “That was translated into the Greek Septuagint as gigantes, which does not mean ‘giant’ but ‘earth-born,’ from the Greek gigas.” It is unfortunate that Missler does not tell his reader from where he obtained his information about the meaning of these Greek words. The standard classical Greek lexicon reports the meaning “Giants” as the first entry for this Greek word. The standard Septuagint lexicon also gives “giants” as the first meaning of this Greek word. Additionally, none of these standard Greek reference works gives “earth-born” as a possible meaning of this term. Missler goes on to say, “Although the word is translated into English as ‘giants’—and they did happen to be very large—it is not true to the original text.” Not only is Missler’s translation contrary to the original text, but he makes the illicit claim that, “they did happen to be very large.” If the word used in the text does not mean giants, then on what basis does Missler claim that they were “very large.” Such groundless assertions are indicative of the persistent eisegesis that Missler practices.

6. Concerning the term “perfect,” Missler says, “The word perfect is a term to mean ‘without blemish, ‘sound,’ ‘healthful, ‘without spot,’ or ‘unimpaired.’ It is always used with regard to physical defects.” Once again Missler has misrepresented the case. The very second occurrence of this word in the OT cannot be taken to refer to physical defects. The verse is Gen. 17:1: “Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless [tamiym].’” The idea that God is telling Abram to walk before Him and be without physical defect is patently absurd. Such incompetence should alert the reader to look with suspicion on all of Missler’s expositions. Consequently, Missler’s claim that the text declares that Noah’s “genealogy was not blemished” is shown to be false. In fact, the text simply says Noah himself was blameless before God.

7. If one does not accept Missler’s illicit assumptions and the “bizarre” conclusions that are based upon them, then the statements in Jude do not “confirm” his interpretation. It is not necessary to understand Jude as referring to some cohabitation between fallen angels and women.

---

20Ibid., 26-27.


22A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint, 1992 ed., s.v. “γίγας, -αντος.” The entry reads: “Gn 6,4 (bis); 10,8,9(bis) giant, mighty one (mostly pl.).”

23Missler, 27.

24Ibid.
Rather, it is completely consistent with Jude’s context to understand his statements are referring to the original fall and rebellion of Satan and the angels who followed him. Jude can only be understood as “making an allusion to these events in Genesis 6” if one assumes the angelic-cohabitation view and imposes it upon the text of Jude. The reference to “strange flesh” concerns the actions of those in Sodom and Gomorrah who cohabited with the same sex—men with men, and women with women. The angelic-cohabitation view is not a case involving “strange flesh,” because the text indicates that males, “sons of God,” took females, “daughters of men.” Consequently, the reference in Jude to “strange flesh” cannot properly be an allusion to the cohabitation of male angels with female humans.

8. Missler’s reference to 2 Peter suffers from the same shortcomings. Missler says, “Peter . . . also used a term for hell that was only used in the New Testament: tartarus, a term used in Greek literature for ‘a dark abode of woe’ or ‘a pit of darkness of the unseen world.’” Missler seems unable accurately to present the facts of the case. The word tartarus appears three times in the Greek version of the Old Testament: Prov 30:16; Job 40:20 and 41:24. Discovering the occurrence of this term in the OT is a simple matter of consulting a concordance. Such lack of reliable research on Missler’s part sheds doubt upon the quality of his entire book.

9. Missler’s critique of what he calls “the lines of Seth” view turns out to be a straw-man argument. It is not a necessary part of this view that the sons of God refer to “the leadership of the line of Seth, nor is it even a part of the view that “the sin involved was their failure to maintain separation—the two were not to mix.” Missler’s report that this view “started in the fifth century A.D.” is apparently designed to cause the reader to question its validity on the basis of its origin. But, such points are instances of the genetic fallacy. The origin of a truth claim, or an interpretation, does not necessarily disqualify it as a true claim or a correct interpretation. The fact that the angelic-cohabitation view probably finds its beginnings in the mid-second century B.C. in the apocryphal book of 1 Enoch does not mean that the view is necessarily wrong, nor does the fact that the “lines of Seth” view began with Celsus disqualify it.

Missler’s claim that the Sethite view “violates the text” is unsubstantiated. He says, “The phrase, ‘sons of God,’ is never used of believers in the Old Testament.” But this fact has nothing to do with the Sethite view since the Sethite view does not make this claim. Also, it is simply false to assert that the phrase is never used this way, because this is the very point that is being contested. Missler’s imaginary opponents are apparently claiming that it is so used in this context. But, as is his practice, Missler does not bother to prove his claims, he simply makes them. To the contrary however, Missler claims that the phrase, “sons of God” refers to “fallen angels,” and yet this phrase does not have this meaning in any of the other places where it is used.

25Ibid.

26Ibid., 28.

27Ibid.
The assertion, “Seth was not God and Cain was not Adam,” is nonsensical and irrelevant since no one claims that they are. Since it is not a part of the Sethite view that the lines were supposed to “remain separate,” Missler’s criticism simply misses the real issues. His assertion, “‘all flesh are corrupted’ . . . include the Sethites” is precisely the point of the Sethite view. However, it is not obvious that a cohabitation between angels and women would constitute a corrupting influence. Additionally, the text clearly says, “they took to them women from all whom they chose.” However, the text does not say that the sons of God took every single woman alive at the time. If follows than that there were women who were not taken by the sons of God. Consequently, it does not follow that “all flesh was corrupted.” If Missler’s view is accurate, then the biblical text must not be. How could “all flesh” be corrupted as a result of angels cohabiting with some women.

Missler claims that the “real problem” with the Sethite view is the “Nephilim.” He declares, “When believers and unbelievers marry, they do not yield offspring that are physiologically different.” But where does the text of Genesis say the Nephilim were “physiologically different”? Missler went to some length to claim that the Greek word gigantes does not mean “giant,” but rather means “earth-born.” But, how does he get physiological difference from a word that means “earth-born”? Since the word does not carry the sense of physiological difference, Missler’s criticism of the Sethite view once again misses the mark.

Missler claims that the Sethite view “infers the godliness of the Sethites, which the text does not support.” This is a very curious statement since on his own website he declares, “The Flood was preceded by four generations of prophets/preachers warning of the coming judgment: Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah.” Does Missler really expect his readers to believe that Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah were ungodly “prophet/preachers warning of the coming judgment”? By Missler’s own admission the text does indeed support the notion of the godliness of the Sethites.

Additionally, the repetition of certain affirmations with reference to certain descendants of Seth can indeed be taken as textual support for the “godliness” of the line of Seth. Gen. 4:26 points out that it was at the birth of Enosh, Seth’s first born, that “men began to call upon the name of the Lord.” Other such observations concerning the line of Seth are made, such as “Enoch walked with God,” “Noah was a righteous man,” “Noah walked with God.”

Additionally, the narrative style sets up a contrast between the descendants of Cain and the descendants of Seth, not the least of these is the contrast between Lamech, the seventh from Adam through Cain, and Enoch, the seventh from Adam through Seth. The text points out that Lamech took two wives. Immediately the reader is alerted to Lamech’s departure from the husband-wife relationship established in the garden—one man and one woman: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife [singular]; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both [literally “the two of them”] naked and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:24-25). In his poem, Lamech boasts of killing at least one man, and possibly two. But, rather than

---

28Ibid.

29Ibid.

Ibid. 31

Crying out to God for protection from the blood-avenger, as Cain did, Lamech essentially boasts that he does not need God’s protection, for he can protect himself. The sense of separation from God, which overtly begins in verse 4:16 with the declaration, “Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord . . .” culminates in Lamech’s boastful arrogance and self-righteousness. This picture is in stark contrast to depiction of Seth’s descendants. Contrary to Missler’s claim, the text does indeed support the notion that the line of Seth was the godly line.

Missler’s charge that the Sethite view “infrers a Cainite subset of the Adamites” that he claims is a case of “reading into the text” actually misrepresents the Sethite view. It is not necessary to infer any “Cainite” subset in order to conclude that someone’s descendants follow a path of separation from God. In fact, the Caanites who dwell in the land at the time of the invasion of Joshua are characterized in the Scripture as a people who, for 400 years, have lived in opposition to the will of God. It is not necessary to claim that the Caanites are a “subset” to view them in this light.

But, let us concede that the Sethite view does propose a Cainite subset of the Adamites. It is only a case of “reading into the text” if one accepts Missler’s view. Once again Missler merely declares rather than demonstrates. If one reads the text from the perspective of the Sethite view, one might be able legitimately to argue that the text supports the notion of a Cainite subset. Indeed, what in the world does Missler mean by the term “subset” anyway? Cannot the term be used simply to refer to a genealogical line, which Cain’s descendants certainly constitute.

10. On his web site, Missler presents other arguments relating to this issue, one of which is very revealing. Missler says, “Incidentally, the Nephilim didn’t completely end with the flood. Genesis 6:4 mentions, ‘. . . and also after that . . .’ We find the sons of Anak, the Anakim, later in the Old Testament.” What Missler is claiming is that the text of Genesis is in error. Gen. 6:17 says, “Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.” This seems to make it clear that everyone, every human being, except Noah, his wife, his sons, and his sons’ wives, would be destroyed from off the face of the earth. By contrast, Missler claims that not all of the Nephilim were destroyed. In other words, Genesis is wrong. Lest there be any doubt about this contrast, consider the statement in Gen. 7:21-22: “All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died.” Whereas the text of Genesis clearly says all mankind died, except for those who were on the ark, Missler just as clearly claims that not all mankind died. There can be no doubt that Missler is ascribing error to the biblical text.

11. Again on his web site, Missler makes reference to the statement by Jesus in Matt. 22:30. Missler says, “There is a great deal revealed in the Bible about angels. They can appear in human form, they spoke as men, took men by the hand, even ate men’s food, are capable of direct physical combat, some are the principal forces behind the world powers. They don’t marry (in

31Ibid.
Heaven), but apparently are (or were) capable of much mischief.” Of course, as is his practice, Missler conveniently misrepresents the text. Jesus’ statement in Matthew is: “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.” Missler makes a subtle change in the text. Missler says, “they don’t marry (in Heaven) . . .” Jesus did not say they don’t marry in heaven. Jesus says, “angels in heaven don’t marry.” Missler restates the text in such a manner as to imply that angels can marry if they are not in heaven. Such an implication is not present in Jesus’ claim.

But, Missler’s reference to this passage introduces a problem into his view that the sons of God are fallen angels. First of all, it is not at all clear that the expression “sons of God” can be used to refer to “fallen” angels. It is not so used in Job. Rather, in Job the expression seems to be a reference to angels in heaven. Secondly, Missler refers to the statements in Peter and Jude as support for the notion that the sons of God were fallen angels. However, assuming that these passages are even talking about the Genesis 6 event, the implication of these NT passages is that these beings became fallen angels because they went after “strange flesh.” In other words, the implication is that they fell as a result of cohabiting with the daughters of men. It was, in other words, the sexual relation between these angelic beings and human women that precipitated the fall of these sons of God. It follows that prior to this these sons of God were not “fallen angels,” but were in fact, angels in heaven. However, according to Jesus’ statement, angels in heaven are not capable of having sexual relations. This is, of course, the point of his response to the inquisition of the Saducees in Matthew 22. But, if angels in heaven cannot cohabit with women, then they could not have become fallen angels, and they could not have been fallen angels prior to their cohabiting, because the expression “sons of God” would be totally inappropriate as a reference to fallen angels.

12. In his argument against the notion that the line of Seth was the godly line, Missler claims that the English translation “masks” the fact that it was Enosh, Seth’s son, who introduced apostasy into society at this time: “In fact, Seth’s son Enosh was the one who introduced apostasy to that world. This is masked by a mistranslation of Genesis 4:25, which should read: ‘. . .then men began to profane the name of the Lord.’” The verse to which Missler refers reads as follows: לֹּא-שָׁם מַעֲשֶׂה הַנְּכָר, לֹא-יַעֲשֶׂה כְּלַיֵּי הָעָבוֹדָה. The word in question is הִקְשַׁל, huchal, which in English is translated “began.” This is the only occurrence of this word in the Hophal stem in the entire OT. The word occurs in 124 verses of the Old Testament, but only here in this particular form. Several times, however, the word is used to indicate the beginning of an action or condition. An important and interesting instance of the occurrence of this word is in Gen. 6:1. According to Missler, this same word in Gen. 6:1 has the meaning “began.” Also, the LXX does not translate the Gen. 4:26 passage as “profane.” In fact, the Greek word used here is ἠλπίσεν from ἠλπίζειν, which is usually translated “to hope.”

Sir Lancelot Brenton translates the Greek text as follows: “And Seth had a son, and he called his name Enos: he hoped to call on the name of the Lord God.” According to the New International

32Ibid.

33Ibid.
Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis, this word occurs 54 times with the meaning “begin.”\footnote{Bill T. Arnold, “תָּנָךְ,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 1st ed.} In fact, the word is used and translated “began” or “became” seven times in Genesis before it occurs with the meaning “defiled” for the first time in Gen. 49:4. None of the standard reference works, nor even the Septuagint, understand the term in Gen. 4:26 as “profane.” Missler consistently misrepresents the facts and engages in selective reporting. Additionally, the expression, “call upon the name of the Lord,” which occurs in 12 verses throughout the OT, is never used in the sense of being profaned.

Conclusion

There are serious problems with Chuck Missler’s handling of Genesis 6 and the question of the identity of the sons of God. He repeatedly misrepresents the text and the facts, and he often reads into the text meanings that cannot be sustained by the context or by the Hebrew language itself. Additionally, the Angels View has problems from which it cannot recover. The failure of the Angels View is evidenced by the rising popularity of what has come to be known as the Tyrants view. More and more contemporary commentators are abandoning the Angels view in favor of the Tyrants view, primarily because they have come to realize that the Angels view cannot be sustained against close examination. There is no questioning Missler’s sincerity and dedication, but on this subject, he has missed the mark.
WORKS CONSULTED


________. “Mischievous Angels or Sethites?” http://www.khouse.org/articles/biblestudy/19970801-110.html


WHO ARE THE SONS OF GOD IN GENESIS 6?
Part 2: The Tyrants View

By

Thomas A. Howe, Ph.D.
Professor of Bible and Biblical Languages
Southern Evangelical Seminary
WHO ARE THE SONS OF GOD IN GENESIS 6?
Part 2: The Tyrants View

Introduction

Part 1 of this series was primarily a response to Chuck Missler’s arguments about the identity of the sons of God. Along with this, we included a section critiquing the Angels view. Part 2 will be a critique of the Tyrants view. Of course, one problem we immediately face is that the context is perhaps just as controversial as the statement itself. Verses 6 and 7 of Genesis 6 follow upon one of the most debated passages in the Old Testament, Gen. 6:1-2: “Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.” There is no question that the identity of the “sons of God” in Gen. 6:2 has been a point of controversy for many years. The controversy over the identity of the “sons of God” and “the daughters of men” has implications for understanding the significance of these verses at this point in the Genesis record. To whom the expression “sons of God” refers determines why it occurs here.

The identity of the sons of God is not only an interesting question. It is also important to understand the spiritual lesson that is being taught here. This is a lesson that Israel failed to learn, even though this is at least the third time this same lesson has appeared in the first six chapters of Genesis. It is a lesson that we, as Christians, must learn, or we will surely suffer for not learning it. But, it is not enough, I think, merely to present my position. I think it is critical to the lesson to understand why the competing views are inadequate.

What Does the Text Say?

The first issue we face in trying to understand this phrase is to discover what were the exact terms in the original text of Gen. 6:2. Before we can attempt to understand what the text means, we must settle on what the text says. This step is called textual criticism. Now we are not going to delve into the technical aspects of textual criticism, but we do have to establish what the text originally said simply because there are some who raise the question. Genesis was originally written in the Hebrew language. But the original documents, called the autographs (meaning “the writings themselves”), have long sense been destroyed. Over the centuries copies were made to preserve the biblical text. Also, the Hebrew text was translated into other languages, including Greek, Latin, and Syriac. These ancient versions along with the existing Hebrew manuscripts provide evidence for what words were actually used by Moses. The Greek translation is called the Septuaigint and is often referred to by the Roman numerals LXX. The Latin is called the Vulgate indicate that it was written in the vulgar or common Latin tongue. The Syriac is called the Peshitta, which means “straight” and was so named because it was held to be a straight-forward translation of the Hebrew. The importance of establishing what the text originally said is critical to understanding why the competing views are inadequate.

1Our present Hebrew text reads יִהְיוּ לְתוֹךְ, bֶּנֶּה הָאָלֹהִים, “sons of the God.”

2The script that the author used may have been an ancient form of Hebrew called Paleo Hebrew script. The phrase may have looked something like this: יִהְיוּ לְתוֹךְ
of this question, what does the text say, is seen in a comment by Chuck Missler and others who claim, “The Septuagint clearly translates this term ‘angels.’” He is referring to the fact that although the Hebrew word is “sons,” b’nê, which is usually translated “sons of,” the Greek version has word “angels” (αγγελοί, aggeloi). We have dealt at length with this question in Part 1 of this series and have shown that the reading “sons of God” is supported by the LXX and the Syriac Bible. So, there is no convincing evidence that the Hebrew text, from the pen of Moses, had anything other than the words “sons of God.”

Who are These “sons of God”?

Having demonstrated that the inspired Hebrew text has the words “sons of God,” our next task is to understand to whom this refers. There are three main views that have been proposed over the years: 1) The “Angels” view, in which the “sons of God” are held to be angels. There are two versions of this perspective. 1a) The first version argues that these angels are fallen angels who cohabited with human females. 1b) The second version argues that these angels were unfallen angels who fell because they had sexual relations with human women. We have dealt with these views in Part 1. 2) The second main view is that the term “sons of” actually refers to human males, “nobles, aristocrats, and princes,” who were possessed by demons whose “perverted psyches allowed this entrance of the demonic.” We will call this the “Tyrants” view. 3) The third view is the view that the expression “sons of God” refers to the line of Seth. In this view, the godly line of Seth corrupted themselves by indiscriminately taking the daughters of men.

The Tyrants View

The evidence does not seem to support the view that “sons of God” refers either to heavenly angels or to fallen angels. The unproven assumptions seems to be fatal to these views. More and more contemporary commentators are conceding this point and are turning to an different interpretation, what has come to be called the Tyrants view. This view is the up-and-coming view of commentators. The overwhelming problems with the Angels view has convinced many commentators to mediate the traditional view with some sort of notion that “sons of God,” though referring to humans, involves angelic or demonic powers. Bruce Waltke is a proponent of this view. After briefly considering the Angels view and the Sethite view, he declares, “The best solution is to combine the ‘angelic’ interpretation with the ‘divine king’ view. The tyrants were demon


possessed.” Allen Ross, also a proponent of the Tyrant view says, “I find most attractive a combination of the ‘angel’ view and the ‘despot’ view. Fallen angels left their habitation and indwelt human despots and warriors, the great ones of the earth.”

In his criticism of the Angels view, Waltke says, “This interpretation, however, does not fit the context of the Flood, since the flood judgment is against humanity (Gen. 6:3-5) and not against the heavenly realm.” But, Waltke’s criticism against the Angels view is equally effective against the Tyrants view since the tyrants were controlled by demons. Waltke’s quote from W. H. Gispen makes this point: “The text presents us with men who are controlled by fallen angels.” Not only is the flood judgment is against humanity and not the heavenly realm, is not against the demonic realm either. In what appears to be an attempt to head off this criticism, Waltke says, “Their perverted psyches allowed this entrance of the demonic.” But there is no indication in the text that the “sons of God” had perverted psyches, and how appropriate would it be to identify men with perverted psyches as “sons of God.”

Additionally, why should we conclude that the sexual relation between demon possessed men and women would necessarily produce evil offspring? The Bible has plenty of instances in which the sons of evil men were themselves righteous. A prime example of this is Saul, the first king of Israel. Saul was condemned by God because of his evil. Yet Jonathan, his son, was a righteous man who trusted God and befriended David. Just because their fathers were demon possessed does not mean that the children were necessarily evil. That being the case, why even bring up the relations between demon possessed men and women? It doesn’t account for the evil of the children.

In defense of this view, Allen Ross asserts, “The view that interprets the ‘sons of God’ solely as powerful rulers does not, in my opinion, make enough use of the literary connections with pagan literature.” But why assume that the Word of God must be connected with pagan literature? In fact, would not a view that the judgment upon mankind was due to mankind’s own rebellion against God and not due to some superhuman interference be a fitting polemic against the pagan literature of the day? Already the text of Genesis has reported facts that were contrary to the generally accepted pagan views. As Cassuto observes,

---

6Ibid., 117.


11Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 182.
All kinds of wondrous stories about the creation of the world were wide-spread throughout the lands of the East. . . . Then came the Torah and soared aloft, as on eagles’ wings, above all these notions. Not many gods but One God; not theogony, for a god has no family tree; not wars nor strife nor the clash of wills, but only One Will, which rules over everything, without the slightest let or hindrance; not a deity associated with nature and identified with it wholly or in part, but a God who stands absolutely above nature, and outside of it, and nature and all its constituent elements, even the sun and all the other entities, be they never so exalted, are only His creatures, made according to His will.12

The unproven assumption made by Ross is that the only way one can understand the “literary connections with pagan literature” is if the text makes assertions that are similar to or reminiscent of the assertions made in these pagan texts. However, the literary connection, as seems to be the precedent set forth in the biblical account of creation, is a view of the facts that is contrary to and often contradictory of the view set forth in pagan literature. An understanding of the flood as a judgment brought on solely by the sinful actions of men, not brought on by angels, fallen or otherwise, or by the control of demons, serves to contrast the truth with the fiction. The evil is from men who are evil—not from Satan, or demons, or fallen angels. As a preview and type of the final judgment, understanding the judgment as the fault of mankind fits not only the context, but the flow of biblical theology.

But, there is yet another fatal flaw in the Tyrants View that no one has addressed. Remember, the Tyrants View rejects the notion that the term “sons of God” refers to angels or demons. They hold that the sons of God are human beings who are possessed by demons. But, if the term “sons of God” refers to humans, then where is there any reference in the text to demons? Once you eliminate this reference as a reference to angels or demons, suddenly there is no term or statement in the text that even hints at the presence or activity of demons. Likewise, if you take the term “sons of God” to refer to angels or demons, then where is the reference to the men? What the proponents of the Tyrants View have done is assume the conclusion of the Angels view, and then rejected any biblical basis for it, imported these conclusions into the text, and used this imposition as an explanatory paradigm. But, this just cannot be supported by the text.

**Conclusion to the Critique of the Principal Views**

There are just too many inconsistencies and faulty assumptions associated with the Angels View and the Tyrants View. Besides these internal problems, there is the primary shortcoming of these two views—they do not give any reason for the existence of this account. Why does Moses even include this material in the narrative? Some will say that Moses includes it because it happened that way. I believe these events certainly happened exactly as Moses reports them. But there are a multitude of other historical events that must have happened that Moses does not include. For example, the first 40 years of Moses life are briefly presented in ten verses in Exodus. I seriously

---

doubt that every historical event that occurred in these 40 years is included in these ten verses. There is no doubt that Moses excluded much historical material.

This raises the question, “Why did he include some events and exclude others?” Moses must have had a reason for including this material, and it seems very likely that he did not include it simply because it happened. For some reason, this material must be relevant to understanding the passage. But, neither the Angels View nor the Tyrants View offers any reason. It’s not simply the case that the proponents did not bother to offer a reason. The fact is, neither one of these views seems to provide any reason for this account being here. What difference does it make if fallen angels had sexual relations with human females to produce evil offspring? Is the evil that brings on the flood the result of the overpowering of men by evil spirits? Then it would seem to be their fault, not the fault of mankind, and the Flood seems to be unconnected to these events.

The same problem faces the Tyrants View. If these men were possessed by demons who forced them to do what they did, then the fault lies with the demons, not mankind. The same problem faces the couple in the fall. Eve was not overpowered by the Satan and forced to take the fruit, and Adam was not overpowered by Eve and forced to eat the fruit. Eve was deceived, but the text indicates that the choice was her’s: “She saw that it was good . . .” Also, if either Eve or Adam were forced to eat, then why does God judge them for their sin? With the Angels View and the Tyrants View, we are left with the question, why is this account even included here? What does it contribute to the text? I think the only way to make sense of this account is the Sethite View, that the sons of God are the descendants of Seth, and we will argue for this in the subsequent installations of this series.
WORKS CONSULTED


WHO ARE THE SONS OF GOD IN GENESIS 6?
Part 3: The Sethite View
Background and Exposition of Gen. 6:1-6

By

Thomas A. Howe, Ph.D.
Professor of Bible and Biblical Languages
Southern Evangelical Seminary

©Copyright 2004
This article and parts thereof may not be reproduced in any form, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise) without prior written permission of the author, except as provided by United States of America copyright law.
WHO ARE THE SONS OF GOD IN GENESIS 6?
Part 3: The Sethite View

Introduction

In order to address the question of the identity of the sons of God in Gen. 6:2 it will necessary to see these verses in the light of certain background features from the earlier chapters of Genesis. I believe these background features bear out the truth of the Sethite view of the identity of the sons of God. This background will take us back to the narrative material leading up to this event.

Background

The creation account is divided into two large units corresponding to the characterization of the earth in 1:2 as empty and uninhabitable (see Figure 1 below). The six days are the pattern of the creation in which God addresses these two states. The first six days God makes the earth habitable, and the second three days He fills it up. The creation pattern is subduing and filling—God subdues the chaos and establishes order, and then He fills the earth with life. Not only is the creation account divided into these two major parts, but the individual days are parallel—day 1 with day 4, day 2 with day 5, and day 3 with day 6, each pair presenting a creating, or making habitable corresponding to a day in which that which was made habitable is filled.

Gen. 1:26 and following record the creation of the man and the woman.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen. 1:26-28).

God created them in His image and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the land and subdue it. This was a command to be like God. The creation account is the record of God’s creative activity in subduing and filling. God subdued the chaos by the word of His mouth, establishing the cosmic order and forming a place in which man could live. Then God filled up the order cosmos with the heavenly bodies, plants, birds of the heavens, sea and land creatures, and finally man. As God subdued and filled, He commands the couple to fill and subdue. This pattern is repeated in the three pairs of creative activity forming the six creative days.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
<th>Day 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verses</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>9-13</td>
<td>14-19</td>
<td>20-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>And God said</td>
<td>And God said</td>
<td>And God said</td>
<td>And God said</td>
<td>And God said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God spoke</td>
<td>v. 3 - And God said</td>
<td>v. 6 - And God said</td>
<td>v. 9 - And God said</td>
<td>v. 14 - And God said</td>
<td>v. 20 - And God said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Light created</td>
<td>Division between light and darkness</td>
<td>Collection of waters</td>
<td>Appearance of dry ground</td>
<td>Creation of luminaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expans</td>
<td>Division between waters above and waters below</td>
<td>Sprouting of the land with herbage and trees with fruit and seeds</td>
<td>Creation of sun, moon and stars</td>
<td>Division of light and darkness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repetition of reference to light and the division between light and darkness</td>
<td>Repetition of reference to waters below and to the expanse identified as &quot;heavens&quot;</td>
<td>Repetition of reference to dry ground</td>
<td>Repetition of reference to dry ground</td>
<td>Repetition of reference to dry ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naming</td>
<td>Called the light &quot;day&quot; and called the darkness &quot;night&quot;</td>
<td>Called the expanse &quot;heavens&quot;</td>
<td>Called the dry ground &quot;land&quot; and called the collection of waters &quot;seas&quot;</td>
<td>Called the dry ground &quot;land&quot; and called the collection of waters &quot;seas&quot;</td>
<td>Called the dry ground &quot;land&quot; and called the collection of waters &quot;seas&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evalu</td>
<td>v. 4 - God saw that it was good</td>
<td>v. 10 - God saw that it was good</td>
<td>v. 18 - God saw that it was good</td>
<td>v. 21 - God saw that it was good</td>
<td>v. 25 - God saw that it was good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>And it was evening, and it was morning, day first.</td>
<td>And it was evening, and it was morning, day second.</td>
<td>And it was evening, and it was morning, day third.</td>
<td>And it was evening, and it was morning, day fourth.</td>
<td>And it was evening, and it was morning, day the fifth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Copyright 2004 - Thomas A. Howe
Whereas chapter 1 records the six creative days, chapter 2 is a detailed look at the creation of the man and the woman (see Figure 2). What is taken by contemporary critics to be a contradiction in the order of creation is actually a misrepresentation by these critics of the Hebrew text. Critics claim that although Genesis 1 indicates that God created the animals and then man, they charge the text with contradiction based on their translation of Gen. 2:19: “Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought [them] to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.” They claim that this verse clearly asserts that God created the animals after He had created man. However, this is a simple matter of ignoring the proper syntax of a Hebrew verb. Hebrew does not have a separate form for a Past-Perfect tense. In English, a past perfect would be formed by add the helping word “had” to the verb to indicate that some past action had happened prior to some other past action. Since Hebrew does not have these helping words, the simply Perfect tense of the verb must be used to express a simple past as well as in other contexts a Past-Perfect. So, verse 19 should be translated: “Out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast . . .” This harmonizes with the order of creation in Genesis 1 and is a perfectly legitimate way to translated this verb. In Genesis 2, God plants a garden and causes the man to rest (תֵּשַׁבֵּחַ) in the garden to worship and serve Him. From the man’s side God forms the woman who is to be his mate.

Chapter 3 is the account of the fall of the couple in the garden. God had instructed Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge, good and evil. The woman is deceived by the Serpent, and she sees that the tree is good, and takes the fruit and gives to her husband with her, and they both eat the forbidden fruit. God judges the man, the woman, and the serpent. The judgment upon the serpent is his ultimate defeat at the hands of the seed of the woman, and this is symbolized by the fact that the serpent will go on its belly and eat dust. The toil of the woman in child birth is multiplied, and the toil of the man is the fact that he must work the cursed ground in order to sustain his life. God drives the man out of the garden: “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Gen. 3:22).
Chapter 4 begins with the expression, “And Adam knew [יָדָ֣ה, yāda’] his wife Eve…” This connects chapter 4 with the previous narrative that is characterized by the couple’s quest for knowledge (דָּאָתָה, da’ath, from the same root as the word “knew”) issuing in their rebellion against God. Eve gives her son the name Cain saying, “I have created a man with the Lord” (Gen. 4:1). In verse 25 the text points out, “Adam knew his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth…” but curiously, in verse 2 there is no reference to Adam “knowing his wife” in order to produce Abel. Also, though the text indicates why she gave her first son the name “Cain,” and why she gave Seth his name, there is no explanation as to why she named her second son “Abel.” Notice also, Abel is a keeper of the flocks, while Cain is a worker of the cursed ground. Abel’s occupation is the exercise of dominion over the beasts of the field as God had commanded Adam and Eve before the fall. Cain’s occupation is working the cursed ground, which was a result of the fall.

Cain plots to kill his brother Abel, and God curses him. As the first couple is driven out of the garden, for, in a sense, killing themselves, Cain is driven out from the presence of God for killing his brother. He journeys to the East and builds a city which he names after his first born son Enoch. Enoch produces a son named Irad. Irad produces a son named Mahujael. Mahujael produces a son named Mathushael. And Mathushael produces a son named Lamech. Notice that there is no comment about the length of their lives of these individuals, how long they lived, or that they died.

Interestingly, the text provides a lot more information about Lamech than about any of his ancestors except Cain. This invites the comparison between Cain and Lamech. Lamech’s name probably means something like, “a very powerful man.” Notice that contrary to the pattern established in the garden, “and the two shall become one flesh,” Lamech takes two wives. Lamech boasts of killing at least one man—perhaps two—and he does not need God’s protection, as did Cain. Lamech boasts that he is able to protect himself. Lamech produces three sons and one daughter. For each of the sons, the text tells us something about his influence on the antediluvian society. However, the text says nothing about the influence of the daughter, whose name was Naamah, נָּאָמָה (Na‘emah). Victor Hamilton points out that the name Naamah means “pleasant, graceful, gorgeous.” It is a curious thing that this person would be named and yet not be associated with any identifying accomplishment as are her brothers. As Robert Adler comments, “One might expect an identification that would align Naamah with her siblings as a founder of some basic activity of human culture, but if such an identification was part of the original epic role call, it has been either lost or deleted.” It is more likely that Moses deliberately omitted any such reference and that this omission is designed to emphasize an aspect of Naamah’s importance later in the context.

Chapter 4 ends with the statement that Adam knew his wife again and that she gave birth to Seth: “Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for,

---


[she said], ‘God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him.’” The final verse of chapter 4 says, “To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then began to call upon the name of the Lord.”

Chapter 5 is the genealogical record of the descendants of Adam through Seth. Notice how chapter 5 begins: “This is the book of the generations of Adam [ןָוֶּת אדִּי]. In the day when God created man [ןָוֶּת אדִּי], He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man [ןָוֶּת אדִּי] in the day when they were created. When Adam [ןָוֶּת אדִּי] had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of [a son] in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

The similarity of the names of the descendants of Cain and the descendants of Seth invite comparison. There are some obvious parallels and contrasts between the descendants of Cain and Seth if we just compare the two lists in order. But, if we move the list of Cain’s descendants down, there are some additional comparisons and contrasts (see Figure 3 below). The names Cain and Kenan derive from the same root. Cain’s first born son is Enoch. Cain built a city which he named after his son Enoch. Enoch was a city dweller. By contrast, the Enoch in Seth’s line walked around (יָתֵקְו יִהְיֶה לְהַלֶּכֶת) with God. Cain’s second son was Irad, which name comes from the same root as the name Jared in Seth’s line. Next in Cain’s line is Mahujael, which means “smitten by God,” which contrasts to Mahalalel which means “the praise of God.” Next is Methushael, which has the same letters as Methuselah. Then follows Lamech, the sixth from Cain and the seventh from Adam, who was a murderer and separated from God, and Lamech, the sixth from Kenan and the eighth from Adam through Seth. Enoch, who walked around with God, is the seventh from Adam in Seth’s line. Lamech in Cain’s line produces three sons and one daughter. Notice that the descriptions of the professions of Lamech’s sons each seems to relate to the primary activities of life. Jabal is the progenitor of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. Jubal is the progenitor of those who are entertainers. And Tubal-cain is the progenitor of those who forge bronze and iron implements. Interestingly there is no descendant of Cain who is the progenitor of any religious practice or priestly cast that might be responsible for directing the worship of God. These observations seem out of place in this context. From Cain to Lamech, the context has portrayed this line as a people separated from God. However, these characterizations of the societal influences of the descendants of Cain seem completely harmless. And perhaps that’s the point. The descendants of Cain are going about their lives, marrying and giving in marriage, and not knowing or caring until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came. Their city presents an organized and prospering society, hiding the murderous character of its founder and inhabitants. The city of Enoch, founded in separation and rebellion against God offers a contrast to the city of God that Abram, the descendant of Adam through Seth, sought.

The character of the descendants of Seth is diametrically the opposite of the descendants of Cain. It begins with Seth and Enosh who call upon the name of the Lord. The restatement of the creation of Adam in the image of God in 5:1-2, coupled with the statement in 5:3 that Adam brings forth a son in his own image, draws a line from Adam, the son of God, through Seth, the son of Adam, to his descendants as the sons of God through Adam. Chapter 5 concludes with Noah, the one who would bring comfort from their toil, and Noah’s three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
The observation or perhaps the prophetic pronouncement of Lamech in 5:29 introduces a comparison and contrast between Noah and Adam: “Now he [Lamech] called his name Noah, saying, ‘This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands [arising] from the ground which the Lord has cursed.’” The curse upon the first Adam was that he would be able to
sustain his life only by the toil of working the cursed ground: “Then to Adam He [God] said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return’” (3:17-19). Lamech specifically declares that Noah will give mankind comfort from the toil of working the cursed ground. Noah is introduced here as the second Adam. This is confirmed by the aftermath of the flood: “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” Also, Noah, whose name means “rest,” offers a sacrifice of rest which God smells. The word “smells” is from the root from which derives the word Spirit.

There are many other parallelisms that depict Noah as the second Adam. Chapters 4 and 5 serve to chronicle the division of mankind into the seed of the serpent, the Cainites, and the seed of the woman, the Sethites. The connection of the Cainites with the serpent as his seed is established in the pattern of murder. The connection of the descendants of Adam through Seth is made in Gen. 4:25: “Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, [she said], ‘God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him.” Of course chapter 4 begins with a similar statement, but there is a significant contrast. In 4:1 Eve says, “I have created a man as the Lord did.” Here the implication is that Eve perceives herself to be on a par with the Lord in being able to produce a man. However, in verse 25 Eve’s attitude has changed. Seth is received as a gift from , not a produce of a creative ability comparable to that of . Whereas Cain and his descendants are characterized by the bookends of the murder by Cain in the beginning of the chapter and the murder by Lamech at the end, Seth’s descendants are characterized by their “calling upon the name of the Lord.”

The separation of mankind into the two opposing forces is reintroduced after the flood in the opposition of the descendants of Babel, who endeavor to make a name for themselves, and Abram who “calls upon the name of the Lord” (Gen. 12:8). This pattern is followed throughout the history of God’s people. The sons of God are opposed by the seed of the serpent, and the failure of the sons of God leads to the division of the seed. Adam’s sin divides his descendants, setting brother against brother. As a result of his fall, David brings a sword into his family and sets brother against brother. Jesus takes our sin upon himself, and, as He said, He did not come to bring peace, but a sword that would divide families.

But notice that God curses Adam because, “you have obeyed the voice of your wife . . . about which I commanded you saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’;” God curses Adam for obeying his wife rather than God. Chapter 6 opens with the observation that men began to multiply upon the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them. If the parallelism between Adam and Noah is accurate, the reference to the daughters of mankind, and the fact that the sons of God indiscriminately take as many wives as they choose, seems to be, in part, a re-enactment of the fall in the garden. Noah lives in a time when the pattern of marriage is abandoned, and Noah must resist the temptation to take as many wives as he chooses. This is yet another significant ingredient for understanding the identity of the sons of God.
Historical Background Summary

The historical background leading up to our text can be divided into five theologically significant narratives. The first narrative is the creation out of the chaos of the waters that cover the land. This is parallel to the post flood narrative in which the present world is formed out of the chaos of the flood waters. The second narrative is the creation and commissioning of Adam as God’s son, who is commanded to multiply and fill the land and have dominion over it, signified by Adam’s naming the animals. This is paralleled by the commissioning of Noah who likewise is commanded to multiply and fill the land. Noah’s dominion is signified by his preserving the animals in the ark, and then by being given animals as food. The third narrative is the fall of man who sins in the garden by eating the fruit of the tree and whose eyes are open so that he knows that he is naked. This also is paralleled by Noah who sins, drinking the fruit of the vine and shamefully exposing his nakedness. The fourth narrative is the conflict of the seed in which Cain is condemned to wander, and the daughters of men entice the sons of God. Seth and Enosh, descendants of Adam, call upon the name of the Lord. This is paralleled by Noah’s descendants after the flood who try to avoid wandering by constructing Babel, but are scattered by God. Babel, which is Babylon, is the harlot who entices the sons of God. Abram calls upon the name of the Lord. The fifth narrative is the judgment in the form of the flood in which the waters once again cover the land as in the creation account. God destroys the wicked by bringing a cloud that signals the flood. The old heaven and earth pass away before the present heaven and earth. This is paralleled by the coming judgement in which the “days of Noah” will be upon the land once again (Matt. 24:37ff). This time God comes in the clouds to destroy the wicked, and the present heavens and earth pass away with the coming of the new heavens and earth.

The Genesis 6 narrative falls within the fourth narrative section in which the sons of God are enticed by the daughters of mankind, and violence is rampant upon the earth ultimately leading to the flood judgment.

Exposition of Gen. 6:1-13

1 And it was that began the man to multiply upon the face of the ground, that daughters were born to them.

Chapter 6 opens with the reference to the fact that the man (ḥâdām), mankind, began to multiply upon the face of the ground. Of course this seems to be precisely the command that God had give to Adam and Eve when He created them, although the expressions are slightly different. Gen. 1:28 says, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land.” Gen. 6:1 says, “And it came about that the man began to multiply upon the face of the ground.” This is only a slight difference. But it may be important. Ever since Gen. 3:17 when God cursed the ground, this term, “the ground,” is associated with the curse. Cain, worked the ground and offered the first fruits of his labor from the cursed ground, and the last reference before chapter 6 is Gen. 5:29: “Now he called his name Noah, saying, ‘This one will give us rest from our work and from the
toil of our hands [arising] from the ground which the Lord has cursed." It may be that Moses says it this way to imply that something is wrong with mankind. Later in the Pentateuch the term "the land," \( hā'āres \) becomes associated with the land of promise. Rather than filling the land, man multiplies on the face of the ground. Notice that the text makes no reference to them being fruitful and filling the land. All these differences seem to subtly indicate some emerging problem.

The term "man" in verse 1 is used to translate the Hebrew term \( ãdâh \), "the man." It is probably simply a reference to all of mankind at this time. In fact, Gen. 5:1-2 says, "This is the record of the generations of Adam \( ãdâ \). In the day when God created man \( ãdân \), He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man \( ãdân \) in the day when they were created." This seems to indicate that he reference, "daughters of mankind" is not so much a reference to daughters of the ungodly line of Cain. Rather, it is simply a reference to daughters generally.

There is also a parallelism with the genealogy of Cain. In 4:21, at the end of the genealogical record of Cain, mention is made of the daughter of Lamech, Naamah. However, the genealogy of Seth recorded in chapter 5 contains no reference to daughters at all. The statement in verse 1, then, serves to fill this gap and to link chapter 6 with both chapters 5 and 4.

2 And saw the sons of God the daughters of the man that good. They also took to them wives from all which they chose.

The expression "and the sons of God saw . . . that good," is reminiscent of that now infamous observation made by Eve in the garden: "And she saw that it was good." This expression seems to be used here to remind the reader of the fall and to connect these events. This is not the first time Moses has used this kind of connection. Chapter 5 begins with the expression "And Adam knew his wife Eve . . ." The term "knew" serves to connect the beginning of chapter 4 with the events of chapter 3, which have been characterized by the term "know": the tree of knowledge, they knew that they were naked.

The last part of verse 2 also has connections with the previous narrative. The text says, "They also took to themselves wives from all which they chose." This is reminiscent of Lamech who took two wives, a practice contrary to the pattern established in the garden of one man and one woman. The problem is the indiscriminate taking of women by the sons of God. There is no hint of any selectivity on the part of the sons of God, endeavoring to find brides who are godly. On what basis do they choose? They choose on the basis of the lust of the eyes. The sons of God take the daughters of mankind simply because "they saw that they were good." In the garden the couple deciding for themselves what was good rather than on the basis of God’s will or nature. Here the sons of God are deciding for themselves what is good, and contrary to the standard established in the garden, they take as many wives as they choose.

What is going on here is the corruption of the godly line of Seth. When Adam, the son of God, was confronted by God in the garden, God said, "You have obeyed the voice of your wife." Rather than follow the pattern established by God’s command, Adam obeyed the voice of his wife.
and rebelled against God. So likewise here the sons of God rebel against the pattern established in
the garden and take matters into their own hands, following the lust of the flesh.

Remember that we observed how the sons of Lamech were each characterized as having in
some way contributed to the antediluvian society and that Naamah was named but nothing was said
about any contribution made by her. It may not necessarily be the case that Naamah has been
neglected by the author. The author’s reference to the daughter’s name may function as a stitch to
connect with the observation in 6:2, “and the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were
beautiful . . .” The word translated “good” in 6:2 is the word is תֹּב (שוב), which is usually translated “good,” but is also frequently translated
“beautiful,” as the NASB does in our verse. The name “Naamah” is probably derived from the verb
נָעַם (נעם), which means “to be beautiful.” One reason the terms are different may be the dual function
that the word תֹּב provides the author. Although the terms are different, however, the use of תֹּב
allows the author to help the reader recall two connections: First, the more immediate connection
with the daughter of Lamech whose name means “beautiful,” and secondly, the more remote
connection with the similar phrase expressed by the first woman, Eve, when she “saw that it was
good.” The enticement of the daughters of Cain, Naamah being the representative, has lured away
the sons of God to intermarry without regard to spiritual concerns, and in rebellion against the
standard established in the Garden, “a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave to his
wife and they two shall become one flesh.”

ניָאמֶר יְהוָה לֵאָרְצוֹנוּ רֹחִי בָּאָדָם לוֹלֵעָם בְּשֶׁיָם הָאֵבָא יָהּ יָהּ יִבְיֶה מְבָאֵוְו מְבָאֵוְו:

3 And said the Lord, “Not abide with My Spirit in the man to forever, for who also he flesh and
they will be his days One Hundred and twenty years.”

The term that is often translated “strive,” יָדֹן (yādin), occurs only here in the entire OT.
Coupled with the expression “in the man” (בְּעָדָם bā’ādām) it seems to indicate the notion of
abiding in or with mankind. Once again this is a connection with the previous narrative. The word
“forever,” לֵוָלָב (lēvelāb) occurs only once prior to this verse, and that is in Gen. 3:22. In that verse, God
drives Adam out of the garden: “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil;
and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.”
Adam will not live forever by means of partaking of the tree of life. Nor will “the man” live forever
by the indwelling of the Spirit. Because of Cain’s violence against his brother, God separated Cain
from His face. Now, because of mankind’s violence, God would separate His Spirit from mankind.
Although it appears that God is pronouncing judgment upon mankind because he is flesh, it may be
that this is an echo of the expulsion of Adam from the garden lest he eat of the tree of life and live
forever. Although man is “like God,” he is also flesh, and lest he live forever in this state of violence,
God will release mankind in 120 years.

This seems to imply that the men who had exceptionally long lives, the ones listed in chapter
5, did so because of the indwelling of the Spirit. In chapter 4 there is no mention of the length of days
of the lives of Cain or any of his descendants.
Once again the term “man” is the Hebrew המָן ("in the man"), this time with both a prefixed preposition and definite article. Since up to this point in chapter 6 this term seems to be consistently used as a reference to mankind, it is reasonable to take it as such here. Traditionally, this has been taken to be a reference to the length of days of the life a man after the flood. However, this does not seem to be born out in the rest of the Scriptures, or in life in general for that matter. It is probably a reference to the amount of time left to mankind before the coming of the flood judgment.

The Nephilim were in the land in those days, and also after thus, who came in the sons of God to the daughters of the man, and they brought forth to them. They the warriors who from ages men of the name.

Why does the author include this parenthetical note? It creates a problem in the text. The Flood account indicates that every human being on the face of the ground, except the eight souls in the ark, were destroyed. So, if everyone was destroyed, how can there be any relationship between the Nephilim before the flood and the Nephilim after the flood. The next time there is a reference to Nephilim is Num. 13:33: “There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.” The term “Nephilim” (הַנֵּפְּלִים) simply means “fallen ones.” The Nephilim after the flood, referred to in Num. 13:33, are certainly not angelic beings of any kind. They are giant sized humans, indicated by the observation, “we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight,” who live in the land and who serve as a terror to the spies. Moses is saying something like this: “Just like there are fallen ones in our time, so there were fallen ones then too.” And if Moses’ connection is of any value, it at least serves to connect these two groups by way of their similarities. The Nephilim after the flood in the land of Canaan were giants and were enemies of the people of God. They were apparently warriors who had a terrible reputation. We can conclude from the few statements in Genesis 6 and its connection with the Nephilim after the flood that perhaps the Nephilim of Genesis 6 were also giant sized humans who, as the text states, were warriors of great reputation. In fact, Gen. 6:4 says, “They were the warriors who were from ages, men of the name.” The picture we get from Numbers indicates that perhaps the pre-flood Nephilim were also warriors who opposed the people of God, or at least the works of God. Notice another interesting connection. The expression “men of renown” is actually, “men of the name.” These were men who made an name for themselves. This will become important in the Babel story where mankind gathers on the plains of Shinar in order to “make a name for themselves” (Gen. 11:4). And what were these men doing? Opposing the commands of God and setting themselves up to be gods.

There is an interesting parallelism or contrast here between the sons of God who come into the daughters of man, and the Spirit of God who will not abide in man forever.

The expression “men of the name” (ןָוָשֵׁי הַאֲשֶׁר) is probably an idiom indicating men who make a name for themselves. This connects up with the postdiluvian society who said, “let us make a name for ourselves.” There is also a strong connection between the Nephilim and Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord. Nimrod was the founder of the city of Babel, which is Babylon.
And saw the Lord that great evil of the man in the land, and every purpose of the thoughts of his heart only evil all the day.

In the first chapter of Genesis, the expression “and God saw . . .” occurs 7 times. A similar expression does not occur again until this verse, “and the Lord saw . . .” Whereas in Genesis 1, God saw that it was good, now God sees the great evil in the land. What was the great evil of the man in the land? Twice in this context the word “violence” appears; in 6:11 and 6:13. Also, there seems to be a connection of this context with the descendants of Cain and especially Lamech. Both Cain and Lamech were murderers, and Lamech took two wives. God had commanded the man to be fruitful and multiply and fill the land. Contrary to this, the man was hunting and killing others.

The term “purpose” comes from the root רָכַל. The verb form of this root occurs three times in the preceding narrative; in 2:7, 8, and 19. In each case it has to do with God forming. In verses 7 and 8 it refers to God forming the man from the dust of the ground. In verse 19 it refers to the fact that God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky. God had formed man and beast and given them life. Now man forms evil and death on man and beast.

The “devising of the heart” is an echo of Cain’s action in killing Abel. Cain devised his plan to do away with his brother. The devising of the heart, coupled with the reference to violence in 11 and 13 seem to indicate that the corruption was murder. Man devised to kill one another, so God would kill them. The punishment fits the crime. This also explains the institution of capital punishment after the flood, Gen. 9:6.

And the Lord was sorry that He made the man in the land, and He was grieved in His heart.

The Hebrew term translated “was sorry” is from the verb יָנָה. The interesting thing about this verb is that it occurs only one other time before this verse, in Gen. 5:29. Let me read from verse 28: “Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. Now he called his name Noah, saying, ‘This one will give us comfort יָנָה from our work and from the toil of our hands [arising] from the ground which the Lord has cursed.’” Also, the term used here, לָעַל, translated “was grieved,” is from the root לָעַל. This is the same root that is used in Gen. 3:16 and 17, כָּלֵב, to refer to the “toil” or “labor” that was part of the curse upon the woman and the man. The woman’s toil or labor in child bearing would be multiplied. The man’s toil or labor would be in providing sustenance. The man and the woman are cursed with grief for rebelling against their Maker. God is grieved for having made them. In Gen. 5:29, Lamech names his son Noah because he will bring comfort from their toil. Interestingly, Lamech does not name his son “comfort.” Rather, he names him “Noah” which means rest. How will Noah bring comfort from the toil which is a result of the curse? By means of rest. How does one obtain this rest? By walking with God.
It is also interesting that Noah brings rest from the toil of working the cursed ground because, in Gen. 9:3, God says, “Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as [I gave] the green plant.” Prior to this point, man was strictly a vegetarian. He could sustain his earthly life only by working the cursed ground. Now God has given man comfort from the toil of working the ground by allowing man to kill every moving thing for food. In other words, man’s life will be sustained by killing living things. Those things will give their lives in order that man may live.

Conclusion

In the concluding installment of this series, we will attempt to bring together the observations and exposition of Genesis 6, and to attempt to answer the question, “Why is the story of the sons of God and the daughters of the man” even in Genesis?” Of necessity there will be some overlap and repeating of material in order to make explicit the connections that support the conclusion that the sons of God are the line of Seth.
WHO ARE THE SONS OF GOD IN GENESIS 6?
Part 4: Conclusion

By

Thomas A. Howe, Ph.D.
Professor of Bible and Biblical Languages
Southern Evangelical Seminary

©Copyright 2004
This article and parts thereof may not be reproduced in any form, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise) without prior written permission of the author, except as provided by United States of America copyright law.
WHO ARE THE SONS OF GOD IN GENESIS 6?
Part 4: Conclusion

Introduction

In Part 3 of this series we gave a summary of the background of our text, and we provided a brief exposition of verses 1 through 6 of Genesis 6. Briefly, what we should have gained from the study so far is the notion that history is unfolding according to God’s plan. The sons of God have defected from the pure worship of God, and God has pronounced judgment upon the land. Although man was created in the image of God, he also is flesh. Even the sons of God are flesh. God has promised to remove His Spirit, and He has set the limit of His patience.

Now you might ask why we are spending so much time on these few verses. This is the fourth installment. I think Warren Gage has said it best: “... first . . . the flood of Noah establishes the fundamental paradigm of biblical judgment recurring in the destructions of Sodom, Egypt, Canaan, Jerusalem (both the first and second temples), and the present cosmos. This pattern of judgment is reducible to three elements: the ‘days of Noah,’ the ‘flood’ of judgment, and the deliverance of the remnant from wrath. Second . . . the catastrophic judgments, modeled after the flood narrative of Genesis 6-7, are with respect to Jerusalem preceded by historical records synthetically parallel to Genesis 1-5.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Flood of Noah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Days of Noah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodom/Gomorrah</td>
<td>Days of Lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus</td>
<td>Moses in an Ark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex. 2:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canaan</td>
<td>Nephilim in the Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Num. 13:33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>Days of Noah/Sodom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isa. 1:9; 5:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present World</td>
<td>Days of Noah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sodom/Gomorrah

In Luke 17 Jesus connects the days of Noah with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah:

And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed (Lk. 17:26-30).

Gen. 19:24 describes the brimstone and fire coming down from heaven as rain. In referring to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Peter uses the rescue of Lot as an example of God’s ability to rescue the righteous. Like Noah who found favor in God’s sight, Gen. 19:19 points out that Lot found grace in God’s sight that resulted in the deliverance of his household.

Exodus

As Noah was delivered from the flood in an ark, so Moses rides above the destruction in an ark covered with pitch. As the mighty waters prevailed in the flood to destroy the wickedness of mankind, so the mighty waters of prevailed to destroy Pharaoh and his army. Ex. 12:21-23 records that Israel sought safety from the destroyer behind the doors. So in Gen. 7:16 Noah and his family sought safety behind the door of the ark. In 1 Pet. 3:20-21 Peter connects the flood of Noah with baptism, as Paul in 1 Cor. 10:2 declared that Israel was baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. As God had made the dry ground appear in creation, so the dry ground appears as a sign to Noah of the abating flood. So also God divides the waters of the sea and makes the dry ground appear upon which the people of God are rescued.

Canaan

The days of Noah and the days of Joshua are connected by the reference to the Nephilim in the land. As God divided the waters of the flood to cause the ark to rest on the mountain, so God divided the waters of the Jordan to bring Israel into the land to give them rest in the mountain of His inheritance. As God had declared that he would destroy every living thing from the earth in the flood, so God charges Joshua to destroy every living thing in the land. As Lot was delivered from the condemnation of the wicked Sodom, so Rahab is delivered from the condemnation of the wicked Jericho.

---

Jerusalem

The days of Israel before the invasion of the Assyrians is characterized in Isaiah 5 as a people who are eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage with no concern for the ways of God. So God promised to bring the flood of the Assyrian army that would rise even up to the neck. Isa. 54:9 specifically connects the days of Israel with the days of Noah. In Isa. 1:9-10 the destruction of Israel is characterized as the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. Nevertheless a remnant would be saved. Isa. 26:20 declares that they should seek refuge behind the door of Babylon to which God is taking them as an ark to preserve them above the flood waters to return to the land in a second Exodus.

Present World

In Matthew 24 Jesus characterized the end times as the Day of Noah: “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah” (Matt. 24:37). Daniel declares that the end will be a flood. The abomination of desolation will be a sign to the faithful remnant to flee to the mountains as did Lot in order to escape the judgment of fire. And Paul declares that all of Israel will be saved. The flood narrative is paradigmatic of biblical judgment. But, as we pointed out when we considered the structure of this material, the focal point is the reference in verse 6 that God was grieved in His heart the He had made man on the earth. The material preceding verse 6 and following from verse 6 present the conditions that lead up to the judgment, and the nature of that judgment.

Our consideration of verses 1 - 3 have presented the defection of the sons of God from the pure worship of God, and that God will remove His spirit from mankind. Verse 4 begins cataloging the degeneration that will lead to the judgment of the flood.

Verse 4 declares that the Nephilim were in the land in those days and also after this, when the sons of God came into the daughters of the man, and they brought forth to them. They were the warriors who were from ages, men of renown.

Verse 4 declares that the Nephilim were in the land in those days and also after these days. Many translations have the word “giants” as a translation of this word. The term “Nephilim” simply means “fallen ones.” It occurs only twice in the OT. We may be able to identify the Nephilim by asking the question, “Why does the author include the parenthetical note, ‘and also after this’”? It creates a problem in the text because the Flood account indicates that every human being on the face of the ground, except the eight souls in the ark, were destroyed. So, if everyone was destroyed, how can there be any relationship between the Nephilim before the flood and the Nephilim after the flood. One thing is obvious from the comment. Moses wants the reader to connect these two groups in some way. The only other time this noun occurs in the OT is Num. 13:33: “There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.” The Nephilim after the flood, referred to in Num. 13:33, are certainly not angelic beings of any kind, nor is there any indication in Numbers that they are the
offspring of angels or demons and human females. They are giant sized humans who live in the land and who serve as a terror to the spies. Moses is saying something like this: “Just like there are fallen ones in the land in our time, so there were fallen ones in the land then too.” And if Moses’ connection is of any value, it at least serves to connect these two groups by way of their similarities. The Nephilim after the flood in the land of Canaan were giants and enemies of the people of God. They were apparently warriors who had a terrible reputation. Additionally, they inhabited Hebron, which was the highest city in Israel. I think we can conclude from the few statements in Genesis 6 and its connection with the Nephilim after the flood that perhaps the Nephilim of Genesis 6 were also giant sized humans who, as the text states, were warriors of great reputation. In fact, 6:4 says, “They were the warriors who were from ages, men of renown.” The picture we get from Numbers indicates that perhaps the pre-flood Nephilim were also warriors who opposed the people of God, or at least the works of God. This is also reminiscent of Lamech. In his poem in Genesis 4, Lamech boasts of killing a man, possibly two, and he declares that he does not need God’s protection. In this poem Lamech is depicted as a man who makes a name for himself by violence. Notice another interesting connection. The expression “men of renown” is actually, “men of the name.” These were men who made a name for themselves. This will become important in the Babel story where mankind gathers on the plains of Shinar in order to “make a name for themselves” (Gen. 11:4). And what were these men doing? Opposing the commands of God and setting themselves up to be gods. God had commanded Adam and Eve to have dominion over the beasts of the field, but these men exercised dominion over other men. There is a strong connection between the Nephilim and Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord. The primary region of his kingdom was Babel, which is Babylon (Gen. 10:10).

The expression “men of the name” is an idiom indicating men who make a name for themselves. This connects up with the post-diluvian society who said, “let us make a name for ourselves.” It is important that this passage, Gen. 6:1-10 is set off by the reference to the sons of Noah in 5:32 and again in 6:10. The first son of Noah is Shem. In Hebrew, the name “Shem” is the word שם. So, Shem’s name is pronounced ‘shame.’ The Hebrew word “name” is in fact the word שמה, pronounced ‘shame.’ Shem’s name means name. The violent Nephilim are men of the name, but Noah, whose name means rest, is in the line of those who call upon the name of the Lord and has a son named “name,” who becomes the ancestor of Abram, who calls upon the name of the Lord. Notice also that in the covenant that God established with Abram in Gen. 12:2, God says, “I will make you name great” [יהי תדובא תדובא תדובא]. One way God would make the Abram’s name great would be to give him the land. But, for Abram to gain the land, it would have to be taken away by force from the inhabitants.

As we pointed out, Num. 13:33 is the only other place in the OT where the word “Nephilim” is used. Num. 13:33 identifies the sons of Anak as the Nephilim, and Num. 13:22 points out that the sons of Anak dwelt in Hebron. The first time we meet Hebron is in Gen. 13:18. The text says, “So Abram moved his tents and went to live by the oaks of Mamre in Hebron, and he built an altar to the Lord there.” This notice happens after the conflict between Lot’s herdsmen and Abram’s herdsmen. Lot looks to the plains toward Sodom and Gomorrah and dwells there. Immediately after Lot departs, the Lord speaks to Abram and says, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that
if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. Arise, walk around the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you” (Gen. 13:14-17).

What is really interesting is that the very next chapter, Genesis 14, records the victory of Abram over the four kings who defeated the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and took Lot captive. According to the testimony of Melchizedek, king of Salem, God delivered Abram’s enemies into his hand. In chapter 12 God promised to make Abram’s name great. In the latter part of chapter 12 Abram is driven out of the land and sojourns in Egypt. Notice that Pharaoh saw the beauty of Abram’s wife and took her. But God brings plagues upon Pharaoh and verse 23 says, “Pharaoh gave his men orders about Abram, so they sent him out, along with his wife and all his possession.” In chapter 13 God promised to give all the land to Abram and his descendants. In chapter 14 God gives Abram victory over his enemies, and in chapter 15 God establishes the covenant with Abram. What does God say? God told Abram that his descendants would be a many as the stars of the sky, and that He would give to Abram this land to possess. He also told him that his descendants would dwell as strangers in a foreign country, just as Abram had done back in chapter 12, that God would execute judgment upon that nation, just as God had done upon Pharaoh in chapter 12, and that afterwards Abram’s people would come out with many possessions, just as was recorded in chapter 12 of Abram. Gen. 15:16 states, “In the fourth generation you descendants will return here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet been reached.” In the following verses God establishes the covenant with Abram promising to give this land to his descendants. How would they take the land from the inhabitants? By war, just as Abram had done against the four kings, and God would give Abram’s descendants victory over their enemies. The reputation of the people of Israel when they came out of Egypt was so great that the Rahab says, “I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. When we heard [it], our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.” God had made Israel’s name great by defeating their enemies.

By contrast, the Nephilim were mighty men, warriors, giant men who made a name for themselves. Next to them, we are as grasshoppers. How can the people of God withstand the power of these mighty men? By calling upon the name of the Lord, and walking around with Him. God destroyed the Nephilim of Noah’s day with the flood, and He destroyed the Nephilim of Joshua’s day with the invasion of God’s army, another flood. The Nephilim of Numbers and Joshua were living where? in Hebron, the very place where Abram went to live after God had promised to give his descendants the land. God will give His people victory over the enemy. How will He do this? Perhaps this is hinted at by the appearance of Melchizedek, king of Salem, who comes out to meet Abram after Abram had defeated his enemies. Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, comes out to meet Abram, and he brings with him bread and wine. Although the king of Sodom offered to give Abram all his possessions, Abram would not take a thing, “That way you can never say, ‘It is I who made Abram rich.” Unlike the sons of God who saw the daughters of the man and took them, Abram would not be enticed by the riches of this world. He looked for a city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Abram believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. How can we escape the coming flood? How can we have victory over the enemy in whose eyes we
are but grasshoppers? By calling upon the name of the Lord, by walking around with Him, and by trusting Him. The world was destroyed because of the wickedness of men. Noah was saved because he found favor in God’s sight. This was a message to Israel about how they were going to have victory over the enemy that dwelt in the land that God had promised to give them. God would bring a flood, the cleansing flood, that would defeat the enemy for us, and we celebrate this victory with bread and wine. This sounds to me like a plan, and this kind of plan does not square with the notion that God doesn’t know the future.

In the first chapter of Genesis, the expression “and God saw . . .” occurs 7 times. A similar expression does not occur again until this verse, “and the Lord saw . . .” Whereas in Genesis 1, God saw that it was good, now God sees the great evil in the land. What was the great evil of the man in the land? Twice in this context the word “violence” appears; in 6:11 and 6:13. Also, there seems to be a connection of this context with the descendants of Cain and especially Lamech. Both Cain and Lamech were murderers, and Lamech took two wives. God had commanded the man to be fruitful and multiply and fill the land. Contrary to this, the man was hunting and killing others.

The term “purpose” comes from the root הָעַרָא. The verb form of this root occurs three times in the preceding narrative; in 2:7, 8, and 19. In each case it has to do with God forming. In verses 7 and 8 it refers to God forming the man from the dust of the ground. In verse 19 it refers to the fact that God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky. God had formed man and beast and given them life. Now man forms evil and death on man and beast.

The “devising of the heart” is an echo of Cain’s action in killing Abel. Cain devised his plan to do away with his brother. The devising of the heart, coupled with the reference to violence in 11 and 13 seem to indicate that the corruption was murder. Man devised to kill one another, so God would kill them. The punishment fits the crime. This also explains the institution of capital punishment after the flood, Gen. 9:6.

The Hebrew term translated “was sorry” is from the verb הָנָּח. The interesting thing about this verb is that it occurs only one other time before this verse, in Gen. 5:29. Let me read from verse 28: “Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. Now he called his name Noah, saying, ‘This one will give us comfort from our work and from the toil of our hands [arising] from the ground which the Lord has cursed.’” Also, the term used here, הָעַרָא, translated “was grieved,” is from the root הָעַרָא. This is the same root that is used in Gen. 3:16 and 17, הָעַרָא, to refer to the “toil” or “labor” that was part of the curse upon the woman and the man. The woman’s toil or labor in child bearing would be multiplied. The man’s toil or labor would be in providing sustenance. The man and the woman are cursed with grief for rebelling against their
Maker. God is grieved for having made them. In Gen. 5:29, Lamech names his son Noah because he will bring comfort from their toil. Interestingly, Lamech does not name his son “comfort.” Rather, he names him “Noah” which means rest. How will Noah bring comfort from the toil which is a result of the curse? By means of rest. How does one obtain this rest? By walking with God.

It is also interesting that Noah brings rest from the toil of working the cursed ground because, in Gen. 9:3, God says, “Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as [I gave] the green plant.” Prior to this point, man was strictly a vegetarian. He could sustain his earthly life only by working the cursed ground. Now God has given man comfort from the toil of working the ground by allowing man to kill every moving thing for food. In other words, man’s life will be sustained by killing living things. Those things will give their lives in order that man may live.

7 And said the Lord, “I will wipe out the man which I have created from upon the face of the ground, from man unto beast, unto creeping thing, and unto birds of the heavens, for I regret that I made them.”

Why does God condemn the beasts, the creeping things, and the birds along with man? The effects of man’s sin corrupt and the universe. Paul talks about the fact that the whole of creation groans and suffers because of man’s sin. Notice that the delineation of those who will be destroyed is in the reverse order of the creation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creation</th>
<th>Anti-Creation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swarms in the waters</td>
<td>Birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birds in the heavens</td>
<td>Creeping things and animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living creatures on land</td>
<td>Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that there is no statement about the destruction of the swarming things in the sea. This, of course, makes since seeing that the judgment is in the form of a flood. But, also, there is a greater judgment coming in which God will destroy even the fish of the sea:

“I will completely remove all [things] From the face of the earth,” declares the Lord.
“I will remove man and beast;
I will remove the birds of the sky
And the fish of the sea,
And the ruins along with the wicked;
And I will cut off man from the face of the earth,” declares the Lord (Zeph. 1:2-3).

One thing that we have tried to point out is that the interconnectedness of the narrative shouts out the foreknowledge of God. There is overwhelming evidence that this has all been planned, and planned down to the minute detail. Such planning and execution demands a comprehensive and certain knowledge of everything actual and possible. But, I think Moses is introducing a point that will be developed throughout the rest of the Bible. It is not simply a matter that God knows everything that is actual and possible, including all of our future free choices. Rather, the point is that God’s knowledge upon which is based His plan, is our only hope. If God does not know everything, past, present, and future, actual and possible, then we have no hope. Isn’t this precisely the speech of God to Job? In chapters 1 and 2 of Job, the reader is given a behind the scenes look at the events that precipitate Job’s suffering. We know that it is not because of any sin of Job that he suffers. So, as the dialogue between Job and his friends develops, the reader gets this feeling of being on the inside: “If they only knew what I know.” As a reader, you are privy to knowledge that gives you a sense of understanding. “I know why Job is suffering, because I saw what happened in the exchange between God and the Satan.”

Then God speaks, and when God speaks, all of a sudden the reader is confronted by the realization, “I don’t understand any better than Job!!.”

1 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,
2 "Who is this that darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?
3 "Now gird up your loins like a man,
And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!
4 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell [Me], if you have understanding,

Remember the characterization of mankind in this very passage: “every plan of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil every day.” Left to our own devices, we are destined for eternal separation from God. Listen to the words of Peter spoken at Pentecost: “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this [Man], delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put [Him] to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power” (Acts 2:22-24). It is not simply true that God knows the future. God’s foreknowledge is our only hope. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. “‘Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,’ declares the Lord God, ‘rather than that he should turn from his ways and live? But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live? All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered for his treachery which he has committed and his sin which he has committed; for them he will die’”
(Ezek. 18:23-24). When open theists deny that God knows future contingent events, they are not simply making an interesting albeit aberrant theological point. They are robbing us of hope. I rather trust in God, Who knows when I sit down and when I rise up; Who understands my thought long before I have it. Who has measured my path and my lying down, Who is intimately acquainted with all my ways. All the days that were formed for me were written in His book before there were any of them. Because God knows all things, He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love.