

*The Theology of the Unseen Realm:
How God Uses Angels, Demons and the Holy Assembly*

“What Really Happened in Genesis 6:1-4?”

I. Introduction

A. Introducing the three primeval rebellions of Genesis, Chapters 1-11.

1. The first rebellion is noted in Genesis 3 where man’s fall is chronicled, but only after the tempting by a divine being. The villain is referred to as the “serpent”.
 - a. I have dealt this this rebellion/fall in many other teachings over the years.
2. The second rebellion occurs in Genesis 6:1-4 which we will analyze shortly.
3. The third rebellion takes place in Genesis 11 which will be studied in a later lesson.

B. These three primeval rebellions are crucial for understanding the unseen realm, the divine counsel, and demonology in general.

1. The key point is that each of these occurrences of expanding human depravity was precipitated by an earlier divine rebellion. The powers of darkness foment human sin and rebellion against God.

II. Genesis 6:1-4

A. This is one of the most perplexing and controversial passages within all of Scripture.

1. Genesis 6:1-4

“¹ Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. ³ Then the Lord said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.’ ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”

2. 120 years? (Genesis 6:3). Some have suggested that this was a new limit on Man's lifespan, but many people lived long lives after the Flood. For example, Shem lived 600 years and many others lived for hundreds of years. Chaffey adds an interesting note. "The Bible does record genealogy information from Adam down to Moses. As soon as the life spans decreased to 120 years, then the Bible stopped recording how old a person was when He died. It is as if Moses showed the fulfilment on Genesis 6:3 by listing all the ages, but as soon as this passage was fulfilled, there is no longer a need to record the ages." (Tim Chaffey, *Fallen, the Sons of God and the Nephilim*, p. 214).
3. There is the vexing question to answer is **"Who are "the Sons of God"?**
 - a. Closely related is the concern over the nature of the Nephilim. **Who are these guys?**

B. Note various views on the identity of the "sons of God."



1. **Naturalistic View #1**

- a. The sons of God were nobles, aristocrats and princes who married young women outside of their social status and took large numbers of females into their harems. See U. Cassuto, *The Episode of the Sons of God and Daughters of Man, Biblical and Oriental Studies, Vol. I*, Trans. I. Abrahams, 1973, p. 18. Meredith Kline modified this view as noted by Waltke. He "... broke fresh ground when he modified "sons of God" to mean "divine kings" (*Divine Kingship and the Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4*. Westminster Theological Journal, 1962, p. 187-204.) In his view, these tyrants are a continuation of the cursed line of Cain who were supposed to administer justice, but instead claimed for themselves deity, violating the divine order by forming royal harems and perverted their mandate to rule the earth under God." Bruce Waltke, *Genesis, A Commentary*, p. 116-117.


1. This is also the ancient Jewish interpretation. It developed one to two hundred years after Christ and continues to the present.

2. Naturalistic View #2

a. **The Sethite View.** The “Sons of God” were choosing inappropriate marriage partners (spiritually corrupt women). This in turn led to a blurring of the godly and ungodly lines. (See John Murray, *The Sons of God and Daughters of Men in Principles of Conduct*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957, pp. 243-249.) It is argued that this view fits the context of Genesis because of the earlier notations concerning the ungodly line (Line of Cain, Gen. 4) and godly line (Line of Seth, Gen. 5). “The result led to a decrease in godly influence and thus an increase in corruption and violence. Inter-marriage with unbelievers is a serious problem that Israel faced as they went into the land of Canaan (Deut 7:3-4) and as they returned from the land of exile in Babylon (Ez 9:1-6, Neh. 13:23-27).” Richard P. Belcher, Jr. *Genesis: The Beginning of God’s Plan of Salvation*, pp. 87-90.

3. Supernatural View

a. The designation “Sons of God” indicates divine (god-like) beings (lesser gods and not simply angels) who engaged in sexual relations with human females with the result of spawning the “Nephilim” (Race of Giants). The actual title “Sons of God” is used in the earliest Old Testament book (Job) to refer to divine beings who are a part of God’s divine counsel. Scholars generally believe that Job lived around the time of Abraham, give or take one or two centuries. The events of Job predate the time of Moses. Consequently, it establishes a precedent for how “*bene ha’ elohim*” (Sons of God) were identified by people of that time and place. The book probably did not reach its completed state until Solomon’s time or after.



1. Job 1:6

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

2. Job 2:1

“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.”

3. Job 38:7

“⁷ When the morning stars sang together
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

Morris notes, “There is no doubt at all that, in these passages [in Job], the meaning applies exclusively to the angels. A very similar form (*bar elohim*) is used in Daniel 3:25, and also refers either to an angel or theophany. The term “Sons of the mighty” (*bene elohim*) is used in Psalm 29:1 and also Psalm 89:6 and again refers to angels,” Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, p. 164-174.



1. Daniel 3:25

“²⁵ He said, ‘Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!’”

2. Psalm 29:1

“¹ Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty,
Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.”

3. Psalm 89:6

“⁶ For who in the skies is comparable to the Lord?
Who among the sons of the mighty is like the Lord.”

b. Calvin rejected this view by simply by stating “that the ancient figment, concerning the intercourse of angels with women, is abundantly refuted by its

own absurdity; and it is surprising that learned men should formerly have been fascinated by ravings so gross and prodigious.” (John Calvin, *Commentaries, Genesis 6:1.*)

1. Unfortunately, he offered no serious critique and did not interact with other relevant biblical passages. He also had no access to the DSS or much of the pseudepigrapha which was penned three centuries before Christ.

2. The respected Keil and Delitzsch commentary asserts the same. The authors maintain that the supernatural view is “... not warranted by the usage of language.” (C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. I: The Pentateuch.* Trans. James Martin. P. 128)

c. Currid is representative of modern commentators who reject the supernatural view. “... there is no supporting biblical data indicating that angels or heavenly beings either marry or have generative powers (See Luke 20:34-36). In fact, a close reading of the text nowhere concludes that the Nephilim are the fruit of the marriages in question. ... All Scripture references used to identify the Sons of God with heavenly beings comes from outside the Pentateuch. ... Such an appearance of heavenly beings would come out of the blue.” (John D. Currid. *Genesis, Vol I.,* p. 174.)

III. Further analysis of each view.



A. Naturalistic View #1 (Aristocracy of Kings)

1. The heart of this view is to understand “the Sons of God” as human kings who were thought to be divine by ancient people groups. This view is argued by presuming that the Sons of the Most High in Psalm 82:6 are human beings and then reading this assumption back into Genesis 6:1-4. Passages such as Exodus 4:23 and Psalm 27 where God refers to humans as his children (Israel is God’s son) are asserted as support for this view. The marriages in question would then speak of the

practice of polygamy on the part of these kings. See Michael S. Heiser, *Demons*, pg. 113.

a. Meredith Kline is not alone in asserting that these “gods” (Psalm 82) were rulers and magistrates. John Gill (1697-1771) states “Rather civil magistrates are meant, the rulers and judges of the people, who by this name ‘elohim’, or gods, in Exodus ... are so called because they are powers ordained of God,” (cited in Tim Chaffey, *Fallen*, p. 51).

2. Psalm 82:1, 6 (ESV)

¹ God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgment ...
⁶ I said, ‘You are gods,
sons of the Most High, all of you.’”

This passage clearly refers to the divine council. The “Sons of the Most High” is synonymous with “the Sons of God”. Psalm 89:5-7 (see below) explicitly situates the “Sons of God” in Yahweh’s council. Consequently, the “Sons of God” or “Sons of the Most High” (Ps 82:6) **are not men**. “It is more coherent, and biblically consistent to read ‘Sons of God’ as supernatural beings as elsewhere in the Old Testament (Job 1:6; 2:1, 38:7, Ps. 29:1).” IBID, p. 114.

a. Psalm 89:5-7

⁵ The heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord;
Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.
⁶ For who in the skies is comparable to the Lord?
Who among the sons of the mighty is like the Lord,
⁷ A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones,
And awesome above all those who are around Him?”

3. There is also a fundamental flaw in viewing these marriages as polygamous. One must read into the text that marriage is even in view. It may be, but the language is imprecise. The relevant phrase of Genesis 6:2 states: “They took for themselves women”. The language is a sexual euphemism and in both verse 2 and 4 the description of the Sons of God “taking” and “entering” simply means sexual

intercourse. The text is making the point that the Sons of God had sexual relationship with the human women and not that they were necessarily marrying them. See Michael S. Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, pg. 96, footnote #8.

4. Believers are called “Sons of God” a few times in the New Testament, but this fact does not support the aristocracy position in regard to Genesis 6:1-4.
5. The divine human king view also does not take into account the testimony of I Peter 3:18-22; II Peter 2:4-5 and Jude 6-7. Further explanation of these texts will come in a later lesson. The most coherent view of these New Testament passages is that they are all interacting with Genesis 6:1-4 and the intertestamental writings of Jubilees 5:1, I Enoch 6:2, and “Book of the Giants” which were all included in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

B. Naturalistic View #2 (The Sethite View)

1. As noted earlier, this position asserts that the godly line of Seth intermarried with the ungodly line of Cain. This view is a continuation of the two seed conflict noted back in Genesis 3:15.
2. Long before Calvin’s contempt for the supernatural view, Julius Afracanus (160-240 AD), Chrysotom (347-407 AD), and Augustine (354-430 AD) asserted this position. The sethite view was extensively elaborated upon in Augustine’s *City of God* in 410 AD.
 - a. Augustine writes, “By these two names [Sons of God and Daughters of Men] the two cities are sufficiently distinguished. For although the former were by nature children of men, they had come into possession of another name by grace ... when they [the godly race] were captivated by the daughters of men, they adopted the manners of the earthly to win them as their brides, and forsook the godly ways they had followed in their holy society.” Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 25, p. 303.

C. Arguments Against the Sethite View of the Sons of God.

1. Nowhere in Scripture is the line of Seth actually referred to as “the Sons of God”.

The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman motif are in play, but the text is more about spirituality than physical lineage. Were all the daughters of men evil while the Sethite line “Sons of God” were all godly based on lineage alone?



2. Genesis 4:26


“²⁶ To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord.”

This text does not say that it was the people from the line of Seth who called upon the Lord, even though Lamech and Enosh are obvious spiritual opposites. This verse does not support the idea that everyone in each line followed in rank.

a. The election account of Isaac and Ishmael as well as Jacob and Esau make the point that fidelity to God is not solely based upon lineage.

3. Regarding Genesis 6:1-4, Chaffey observes, “In verse one, we are told that when men multiplied on the Earth, daughters were born to them. So who were the daughters in this verse? They were the girls born to the men who were multiplying on Earth. There is no textual justification for thinking that these men were limited to one family line or form a special class.” He further notes the inconsistency of changing the meaning of the term “man”. He remarks “... the Sethite position changes the reference to the daughters of all men in verse one to the daughters of some men, namely these in Cain’s line, in verse two ... The problem is that they have now interpreted man in a general way in verse one , a particular way in verse two, and then general again in verse three.” (Tim Chaffey, *Fallen*, pg. 25) Kidner observed the same. See Derek Kidner, *The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Genesis*, pp 83-84.

4. Furthermore, note what often goes unnoticed in the text. In the Sethite view, we are told that the Sethites are only godly. Then we are supposed to accept that in



Noah's day all of this godly line abandoned true religion for unbridled lust! No one in the line prior to this rebelled. Then everyone in Noah's day did rebel. If you think about it carefully, the strange thing about this view is that the godly line – the Sethites are the ones committing the wickedness in this passage. They are the ones taking ungodly women as their wives. Yet, it is even possible to understand “taking” of wives (6:2) to be a violent action against the women. Note Abimelech in Gen. 20:2. The “taking” is not put into a positive light. Also Shechem “took” Dinah. The scene is violent (Gen. 34). Are we to believe that all of the good men are suddenly acting wickedly, while all the daughters of men are also acting wickedly? See Douglas VanDorn, *Giants: Sons of God*, p. 16-17.

5. There were Sethites who were not godly. “For example, we know from 5:30 that Noah had brothers and sisters, but they were probably among the wicked destroyed by the flood ... only eight people survived.” Johnathan D. Sarfati, *The Genesis Account, Genesis 1-11*, pg. 475.
6. Note also that the Bible never refers to Seth as among the “Sons of God, just as nowhere is Cain ever called a “Son of Adam”. In addition, the Bible never identifies the people from Seth's lineage with the descriptive phrase “Sons of God.”
7. In addition, note when speaking of humanity's growth in numbers (Gen. 6:1) that the text only mentions daughters (daughters born to them). The point is not literally that every birth in the history of the earth after Cain and Abel resulted in a girl. Rather, the writer is setting up a contrast between the two groups. The first group is human and female. Verse 2 introduces the other group for contrast i.e. Sons of God. That group is not human, but divine. See Michael Heiser, *Reversing Hermon*, p. 11.
8. Finally, Adam and Eve had other children. How does the Sethite position account for this point?

a. Genesis 5:4

“⁴ Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters.”


b. There would have been other lines beside Cain’s. (See Tim Chaffey, “Who Was Cain Afraid Of?”)

D. Why is the Supernatural View Frowned Upon?

1. Perhaps the largest objection to the fallen sons of God view are Christians’ emotional responses.

a. Robert Duncan Culver notes (*Systematic Theology*, p. 174):


The minds of most educated people today recoil against such apparent “superstition.” Yet the same is true of all the teachings of Scripture about angels and other important subjects – miracles, new birth, incarnation and Second Advent. Such an incursion cannot on principle be ruled out as preposterous. Some of the most sober writers in the history of biblical interpretation have thought Genesis 6:1-4 does describe such an incursion and that it was one of the causes of the judgment of the Flood.

 b. Willem A. VanGemeren writes (“The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4”,

Westminster Theological Journal 43, no. 2, pg. 320):

Why does the theology in which creation, miracles, the miraculous birth and resurrection of Jesus have a place, prefer a rational explanation of Genesis 6:1-4? Evangelical writers proffer, instead of the angelic/demonic intermarriage view, the view that the Sons of God are the Sethites and the daughters of man are descendants of the line of Cain or variations of the intermarriage of two classes of human beings. Why do evangelicals prefer the view of the intermarriage of humans, in whatever variety it may be found?

c. While Augustine was against the supernatural view, yet, he had no trouble in acknowledging demonic desire for sex with women. (Augustine, *City of God*):

 There is, too, a very general rumor, which may have verified by their own experience, or which trustworthy persons who have heard the experience of other corroborate, that sylvans and fauns, who are commonly called “incubi,” had often made wicked assaults upon women, and satisfied their lust upon

them: and that certain devils, called Duses by the Gauls, are constantly attempting and effecting this impurity is so generally affirmed, that it were imprudent to deny it. [Emphasis added] (The four names are for recognized devils.)

IV. Why is this important?

A. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

1. Genesis 3:15

“¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

a. Note conflict between the two.

b. If the seed of the serpent can annihilate the seed of the woman, then “He” will never arrive.

c. Chapter 4 of Genesis makes this point – Cain kills Abel and this becomes a battle plan for the powers of darkness.

1. This is the story of the Old Testament through the life of Christ.

B. However, the seed of the serpent developed an additional battle plan to destroy the seed of the woman.

1. All military strategists know the answer to this question – What is the best way to take a bridge? Answer – Assault both sides at the same time. A two-pronged attack can insure that the opposing side does not destroy the bridge.

2. The serpent’s strategy with a two-pronged attack: 1) Annihilate the seed and 2) pollute the seed of the woman with serpentine seed. Either kill it or amalgamate (combine or unite to form one organization) with it.

C. The next lectures will present the following:

1. Rational and further justification of the supernatural view of Genesis 6:1-4

2. Understand God's plan and the carrying out of His will to not allow the seed of the serpent to kill, pollute or corrupt the seed of the woman.
 - a. The ultimate seed of the woman is Christ alone.

D. Wonderment and Awe of God have been an objective for this class, but now another is being introduced.

1. Holiness – I Peter 1:15-16

“¹⁵ But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

2. Being holy means policing (enforcement) our eyes.
3. “The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful.” (Gen. 6:1). The first sexual sin noted in the Scriptures.
4. I want you to meditate on this point. Sin that is birthed in the body comes by way of the eyes. “David saw a woman bathing”. We are now in the age of voyeurism.
5. Thomas Manton – “Look to your eyes. Much sin comes in by the eye. The eye tempts the fancy, and the fancy works upon the heart.”
6. Psalm 101:3-4

“³ I will set no worthless thing before my eyes;
I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me.
⁴ A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil.”
7. As we push further in our study, watch for greater sensitivity concerning the nature of temptation and what stands behind temptation.
8. What we will be studying is about unholy mixture.