

## **THE SONS OF GOD AND THE DAUGHTERS OF MEN: WHO ARE THE SONS OF GOD?**

Much debate has swirled around this one passage of Scripture. Many believers through the years have seen this passage to be a story of the spectacular intermingling of spirit beings (demons) and human women. The result of these conjugal relationships were giants who ruled the earth as half spirit half human creatures. What I want to submit to you this afternoon is that while many respected biblical theologians have held to this view, I believe that it is untenable. What I want to do this afternoon is to explain to you in some detail why the sons of God in Genesis 6:2 refer to the line of Seth rather than fallen angels. Hopefully along the way I will answer some of the objections that arise concerning this view.

**Note:** I do not deny the supernatural aspects of Scripture.

Because I do not hold to this particular view about sexual intercourse of angelic beings and humans does not mean that I do not believe supernatural events are impossible. My argument will be that this interpretation of this passage is not tenable in its immediate context nor in the context of the whole of Scripture. I don't reject it because I don't believe that the supernatural is not possible.

### **I. CONTEXTUAL SETTING**

Genesis is the book of beginnings, and our text is not too far from the very beginning. God has created the world and man and woman. He has blessed them commanding them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, taking dominion over it (cf. Gen. 1:26-28). Sin enters the world through the deception of the serpent and the willingness of Adam. God comes and restores the relationship by putting enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). It is this battle that is "played out" throughout the rest of Scripture. Indeed this sets the context for all of Scripture.

In the restoration of man, God restores the marital relationship and the attendant blessing of children. But sin will have a consequence. The children will be conceived in sin. God's grace must restore the children. The war is played out in its first scene with Cain and Abel. We know from further testimony of Scripture that Cain was "of that wicked one," Satan, the serpent (cf. 1John 3:12). This does not mean that he was Satan's natural offspring. It means that he was covenantally connected to Satan through loyalty and obedience to lawlessness, in rebellion against God. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. God works through covenant. As we will see, the children of Cain will be like their father: covenant breakers.

On the other side is Abel, who was righteous because of his faith (cf. 1John 3:12; Heb. 11:4). The seed of the serpent seeks to obliterate the seed of the woman for the first time when Cain killed Abel (Gen 4:1-15). Immediately after this incident, Cain's descendants are delineated and the increase of wickedness is shown in his line, especially in Lamech (not the father of Noah; Gen 4:16-24).

God, in His grace, allows Eve to conceive again. This time bearing Seth, who replaces Abel (Gen 4:25). The way Eve sees this is important. God has appointed another "seed" instead of Abel. Remember, Abel was the "righteous one" while Cain was "of that wicked one." The truth of Seth being another righteous seed like Abel is borne out immediately in the context. It is

quite significant that it is when the line of Seth is begun, men begin to call upon the name of the Lord (Gen 4:26). It might be argued that a possible translation would be that men “profaned” the name of the Lord. But really, even though the translation would be possible, it would be extremely awkward in Hebrew. There are two verbs used here: the one translated “began” and the one translated “to call.” The one translated “began” may sometimes be translated “profane,” but it may also take on other meanings. But combined with the verb “to call,” the context seems to demand this translation. This is picked up, by the way, in most translations.

Now, this concept of “calling upon the name of the Lord” is used throughout Scripture to designate worship. God faithfully raises up the seed of the woman. God has promised that this war will be waged throughout redemptive history. In order to do this He must “resurrect” the seed of the woman.

In Genesis 5 Adam’s line is then traced through Seth. Note: not Cain, even though Cain is the firstborn. Cain has been “cut off.” Seth is the true son because he is faithful to God’s covenant. God gives us creation “image” language at the beginning of this section and connects it with the line of Seth. “Image” and “sonship” walk hand-in-hand throughout Scripture. Adam is created in the image of God and is called “a son of God” (Lk 3:38). Seth is the son of Adam and in his image (Gen 5:3). Jesus is the image of the invisible God and the Son of God (cf. e.g., Col 1:15). A “son of God” is an image-bearer. And again, you might remember that Luke the evangelist traces Jesus’ genealogy through the line of Seth. We see here that God blesses his line with sons and daughters. Enoch, the faithful preacher of righteousness in his generation (Heb 11:5; Jude 14), is in this line. He walked with God and was not for God took him (Gen 5:24). It is from the line of Seth that Noah comes. Is this significant? Yes, it is significant that Noah was a direct descendant of Seth and covenantally faithful. In fact, the whole section from 5:1-6:8 is a literary unit. This all leads up to Genesis 6:9 in which we are told, “This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.” This stands in contrast to what has been said in our passage under question and must be given its fullest weight when dealing with the issue under debate. The genealogy lists are not insignificant in Scripture. Moses has recorded the evil line of Cain and the growing wickedness from him and then the godly line of Seth and Noah coming in this line. These two lines represent the war between the seeds.

The creation, fall, the war, and the covenant which encompasses it all are significant to the context of this passage before us and the issues with which we are dealing.

This brings us to the text itself.

## II. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

First, it must be noted again that this text is directly linked to what has preceded. Noah had remained covenantally faithful (cf. 6:9). This stands over against the wickedness for which God will judge the earth and gives the reason Noah and his household will be saved. But what happened to the godly line of Seth? Why is it that Noah is the only righteous person on the earth if there was an entire line of covenantally faithful people? The answer to that question is given in our present text.

We have to go to 6:5-8 to discover the reason that God brought the flood to destroy the earth. Here we discover that God sends the flood because the wickedness of man was great. Every thought of his heart was only evil continually. That which is stated about the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” obviously has some import to this entire event since the two

are connected by context.

Marriage with its attendant blessing of procreation is a gift given to mankind by God (cf. Gen. 1:26-28). But in order to survive man must also live in covenant faithfulness to God. If he does not he will fall under the judgment of God after the same manner as Adam. What we find in the beginning of this chapter is that mankind is indeed multiplying in the earth. God is blessing even as man is acting in an unfaithful manner.

We approach 6:2 and find the crux of this whole debate: “the sons of God” and the “daughters of men.” Besides the two major views, there is a third view which also has its origins in Jewish rabbinical material from an early date. The Jews saw the sons of God as judges or rulers (in accordance with Psa. 82:6). I am not advocating this view because I believe it is just as untenable as the “fallen angel” view. But I don’t want you to get the misconception that the angelic view was the only view the ancient Jews held.

Let me note here also: I am not saying that the phrase “the sons of God” can never refer to angels, heavenly spirit beings. I believe the phrase can as it does in Job 1 & 2. But there are several problems with this view that must be addressed.

**a.** “Sons of God” is never used to refer to fallen angels.

In fact, it is used in contradistinction from “Satan” in Job. We know from the chronology of Scripture that Satan has already fallen and is indeed cursed (cf. Gen. 3). If these angels were unfallen and fell at this time, how many falls happened to the angelic band? It seems that the Scriptures indicate there was only one fall in which one third of the angels rebelled with Lucifer (cf. Rev. 12:1-12, which, incidentally, describes what happens after the fall with the battle between the seeds).

Second, if these are fallen angels at this time, how can they be called “sons of God?” This is a relational term which speaks of covenantal union and communion. “Sons” and/or “children of God” are used to designate people in covenant union with God throughout Scripture. Cf. Exodus 4:22, 23; Deut 14:1; 32:5, 6; Psa 73:15; 82:6; Hosea 1:10; Mal 1:16; cf. also in the NT John 1:12; 1John 3:1-2, et. al. Adam, in fact, is called the “son of God” in Luke 3:38. In Genesis 11:5 the wicked who build the Tower of Babel are called “sons of men,” which could give us a clue to our present context. The language of Psa 82:6-7 also speaks to this issue. Righteous judges among men are called “sons of the Most High,” while those under judgment “die like men.” In all of these references, whether it be the “sons of God” or “the sons of men,” people are plain old vanilla human beings.

**b.** The angelic host, which is alluded to in the original creation, has played no part in the context of Genesis up to this point.

The angelic host has not been introduced at all up to this point. All of the sudden there is now this cryptic reference to angels (demons?) at this point? How would you know from the context that this is speaking of angelic beings? The answer is, You wouldn’t! The only mention of angels outside of creation to this point are the cherubim who guard the Garden. At this time, though, the fall of the angels has already occurred. This happened in or prior to the temptation in the Garden. If this is another angelic host, this would be a second fall, and, as I will mention, this is problematic.

c. The punishment that comes from the wickedness of these relations is consistently said to be on “man,” *ha adam*, and “flesh.”

Judgment upon spirit beings is conspicuously, glaringly, and embarrassingly left out. The entire context of judgment has to do with man’s sins. The intentions of man’s heart are only evil continually (6:5). The judgment of the flood did not alter this state of man’s heart as 8:21 tells us. Nor will God judge the earth again in this manner even though the same wickedness that preceded the flood remains after the flood. If the problem would have been these hideous half-breeds (i.e., that brought on the judgment), and in the judgment all flesh was destroyed off the face of the earth except for eight people (7:21-23; 1Pet 3:20; Noah and his family), God’s verdict would have, no doubt, been different in 8:21. We might have heard something like this, “Noah, I took care of all the problems that caused the flood. The invasion of the body snatchers has come to end.” But the problem was not angelic/demonic intervention in the manner advocated by those who hold the angelic view. The problem was man’s own wickedness and propensity toward unfaithfulness to God. The fact that this was man’s problem and not some supernatural, half-human-half-divine creatures’ problem is shown in the consistent use of “man,” “men,” and “flesh” (cf. 6:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13; 7:12, 23; 8:21). Whatever happened here happened within the human race because humans were the only ones at fault. This is shown by the consequent judgment upon “men.”

d. The ontological problem, or the problem of *being* is another glaring problem in the angelic view.

Early on in Genesis the Bible clearly states that all things that reproduce, reproduce after their kind (cf. Gen 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25). It is not as if God has set up this impersonal law that is independent of Himself that fixes this order. God superintends this process in His providence, ensuring that entities that reproduce do so after their kind. Reproduction between certain classes of species may occur. E.g., a horse and a donkey may breed to produce a mule (which, interestingly enough cannot reproduce). But you cannot cross a wren and an hippo. It just won’t happen because God makes certain that it will not happen in His providence.

The Bible is clear throughout that the heavenly angels and the fallen angels are not a distinct class within humanity, but they are distinct ontologically (i.e., in the very nature of their being). It is clear from **Hebrews 1:7** that the angels are spirit beings, non-corporeal. Christ became a man and in doing this He delivers man from His sin. Hebrews 2:16 says specifically that He does not give His (redemptive) aid to angels. The reason is because He did not take on the nature of angels but of men. In fact He was made for a little while lower than the angels (Heb 2:7, 9). The incarnate Christ, like the rest of us human, was a part of a distinct ontological group—humanity.

Paul makes the difference between “celestial beings” and “terrestrial beings” in 1Corinthians 15:39-40. There are different types of bodies on earth and in heaven.

This problem is further amplified by the language that is used of the nature of the relationships. We know that from the beginning marriage and procreation are given to mankind (Gen 1:26-28). This relationship is given so that God may have godly seed (Mal 2:15). Jesus clearly says that this relationship is not given to angels and will be our estate after the resurrection (Matt 22:30). That which is happening here is not a hideous, illicit relationship between spirit beings and humans. Jesus makes no mention of it in Matthew 24:38-39 when He

compares the coming of the Son of Man to the days of Noah before the flood. Jesus says “they were marrying and giving in marriage,” which, by the way, is the language used in Genesis 6 when it says “they took for themselves wives.” It is interesting that He should mention that. The indication is that society was moving on regularly. Then, suddenly, judgment came. Jesus doesn’t speak about irregular events such as the invasion of demonic or angelic forces having lewd sex with women on the earth. He simply says that everything was going on in the normal course of life.

Even if it is taken that these demons inhabited the men, (1) there is no reason to believe that they could transfer their “substance” through human sperm, and (2) there is no other biblical example (that I know of) where demon possession sexually motivated the possessed. We find that demon possession brought illness and sought to destroy the human body (as well as other bodies; cf. Mark 5 where the pigs were destroyed. They didn’t go out and try to procreate demon piglets). But there is no reference to sexual immorality connected to demonic possession.

Now, it is assumed, based on the presupposition that spirit beings can have sex with humans, that the offspring were some kind of semi-divine being. In our passage the “Nephalim” (trans. “giants” in LXX and followed by AV) are usually reported to be these offspring. There are a couple of problems with this also.

**a.** There is no grammatical connection that necessarily makes these Nephalim the offspring of these unions.

What we could have here is a simple statement of historical setting: “There were Nephalim on the earth in those days, and also afterward. There is more of a connection between the Gibborim (later on this verse) with the offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of men. These Gibborim were men of renown. They were the heroes of the day.

**b.** The derivation of the word “Nephalim” is problematic.

Though some connect these Nephalim with the Nephalim in Numbers 13:33, the connection itself is problematic. First, all flesh was destroyed in the flood. If neither Noah nor his family were part of the Nephalim, then it must be deduced from Scriptural evidence that whoever these Nephalim were died in the flood. Now, in the angelic view, the demons that perpetrated this dastardly deed were bound in Tartarus, unable to do this again (2Pet 2:4). How do they account for Nephalim being there afterward? Did some more angelic beings fall? Did some flesh survive the flood despite what the Bible says concerning only eight people being saved from judgment (1Pet 3:20)?

Now, if we connect the Nephalim with the prevailing problem of the day, exceeding wickedness of men, and understand that evil still existed in the hearts of men after the flood expressing itself in acts of violence (6:5, 11; 8:21), then we can say that these Nephalim were simply wicked men of some sort. (Whether large in stature or giants in wickedness as warriors, it matters not.) Incidentally, Anak the one from whom the Nephalim came in Numbers 13:33 is catalogued with other regular human beings in Deuteronomy 1:28; 2:10-23; 9:2. Quite frankly, Hebrew scholars are unsure from where this word comes. Its derivation is unknown, or at least unclear. One reputed dictionary of OT theology says that the root *npl* occurs in a variety of military connotations, including attacking one’s enemies. The author of this article on the word “Nephalim” goes on to say, “The word nephalim in Gen. 6:4 and Num 13:33 (2x) may possibly

be related to this military meaning of *npl*, and if so would convey the idea of attackers or violent men. This interpretation would certainly fit the Gen 6 context, both in its wider setting, with the violence of Gen leading on to the violence in ch. 6, and with the further reference in 6:4 to the nephilim as “heroes,” “men of renown.” (E.g., look back at Lamech in Gen. 4.) The context in Num 13 also has military overtones, for it forms part of the narrative concerning the investigation of Canaan by the spies” (NIDOTTE 3:130).

There are a number of questions, then, that the angelic view simply does not and cannot answer:

1. The problem of ontology and, thus, reproduction. (I.e., God’s created order)
2. The problem with the “sons of God” relating to fallen angels.
3. The problem of inherited sinfulness of the offspring. These creatures have not descended through Adam because they did not come from a human father. How were they then condemned with the human race?
4. The problem of the judgment being exclusively on mankind.
5. The consistent use of “men” throughout the context.

### III. A SOBER EXPLANATION OF THE PASSAGE

The context of the passage makes it sufficiently clear that what we are dealing with here are mortal men. We find in 6:1 that in the normal course of events of life children were being born. This is no surprise. There is a great emphasis on genealogies within the first eleven chapters of Genesis (cf. 4:14-24; 5:1-32; 10:1-32). Even though under the curse and even though many are wicked, God, in His common grace, is allowing man to be fruitful and multiply (1:28) There is an emphasis on the daughters because they play a significant role in the set up for the judgment that is about to take place.

In 6:2 the sons of God are introduced. It is my contention (along with Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, as well as many others) that the context has set these sons of God up to be the godly descendants that come through the covenantal line of Seth. The reason for the genealogy of Seth through Noah was given precisely to show that Noah was from this godly line and he was the only one that remained godly in the line. He is of the seed of the woman who calls upon the name of the Lord (4:26). Noah was faithful to the covenant as is indicated by God (Gen 6:9). Noah walked with God like his ancestor Enoch (6:9; 5:24). This is what sets Noah apart from the rest of the world at this time ... even the other descendants of Seth. By the two defined and clear differences between Cain and Seth and his descendants, we have been contextually prepared for this. The two “seeds” are living separately and at war, just as it should be. But then something terrible happens. Covenantal faithfulness is not what concerns the people of God (the “sons of God”) at this point. They see that the daughters of men indiscriminately—i.e., without regard for the fact of what family they are from—and they take to themselves wives of all that they saw. [Remember, this is not rape or incest or some other kind of illicit relationship. This is a Hebrew idiom used consistently throughout the Hebrew Bible to speak of marriage.] They follow the same pattern that Eve followed when she partook of the fruit: she saw that the fruit was good for food and able to make one wise, and she took it. The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were good (i.e., “beautiful” in appearance) and they took for themselves wives.

There is nothing wrong with marriage. God has instituted and blessed marriage (Gen 2:18 24), giving the blessings of children to this human institution. But the two seeds are not supposed to intermarry. They are at war. But here they are “marrying and giving in marriage,” as Jesus says in Matt 24. This would be a problem among the people of God throughout our history. Genesis is

the book of beginnings in every way. This is where the problem starts among the sons of God. Later the sons of God will see the daughters of men among the Moabites and take for themselves wives, committing covenantal harlotry on their God. These daughters of men will lead the sons of God into worship of false gods (Numb 25:1-2). This is the very thing God warns them about in Exodus 34:12-16:

Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invites you and you eat his sacrifice, and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.

Deut 7:2-5:

and when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me., to serve other gods; so the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

Even with this example and these warnings, we see the sons of God having this problem again in Judges 3:5-6:

Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods.

God's people again mingle with the foreign women and they turn their hearts to serve other gods. Being in the introduction to Judges, the writer is indicating that this is a persistent problem throughout the period of the Judges. But we see it again in Solomon who "loved many foreign women ... women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites from the nations of whom the Lord said to the children of Israel, You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods. Solomon clung to these in love." (1Kings 11:1-2). These wives most certainly did turn his heart (1Kings 11:4-8). This sanction is still for us in the NC. 2Cor 6:14-18 speaks about us not being unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Instead we should come out from among them and be separate.

Could it be that this incident in Gen 6 provides the first example of this persistent temptation to sin? Is this not a warning to future generations? This covenantal unfaithfulness brought disobedience to the point that God destroyed the entire world. Another question: If it were possible for these angelic beings to intermarry with humans (even after the flood) and produce this hideous race of creatures that would cause God to destroy the world, why are we never warned again in Scripture to watch out for this type of thing? Why is there no warning or command, "Do not intermarry with fallen angels, lest you have giant demon babies"? Yet time

and again we see the pattern of sin that comes in intermarriage with unbelievers. We are warned about it, and we are commanded to avoid it ... on more than one occasion. Just as all of the Bible is found in “seed” form (no pun intended) in the book of Genesis, so this plague of sin upon God’s people will be a constant thorn in the side of God’s people. This will be a repeated temptation because of the wicked imaginations that still plague men’s hearts after the flood as they did before the flood (6:5; 8:21).

## V. TEXTUAL OBJECTIONS

The text, of course, does not end with 6:2. God says in 6:3: “And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.” It is debated what this means. This could be a statement which speaks about God’s impending judgment upon man concerning taking his breath away or it could be that this is speaking about God’s Spirit working through the preaching of righteous men like Noah. Instead, God, from the time of this declaration, will only give mankind in rebellion against him 120 more years. God endured them in their wickedness with patience as Noah was preparing the Ark (cf. 1Peter 3:20). And Christ preached through Noah to those rebellious men who are now existing as disembodied spirits in hell (1Peter 3:19-20). The Spirit will not always strive with man, real humans. He is indeed “flesh.” Man is not a “naturally” immortal being. He is a dependent creature at every turn. Without God’s Spirit sustaining him, man will die.

But the real objection comes from the supposed offspring called the Nephalim. I have no problem seeing these men as unusually large in stature. But I believe the militaristic and “violence” overtones of the passage lend support to the fact that these men were like Cain, their father, and Lamech, the one through whom they descended. They were men who perpetrated acts of violence upon others. These men still exist after the flood because, again, men are still wicked. It may be precisely for this reason that God clearly delineates the law of capital punishment to Noah in Genesis 9:5-7.

We then have the indication that, unlike the Nephalim, the children born are “Gibborim,” or “mighty men.” These warriors are violent men. These men were “men of renown.” They were heroes of the day, and the people in later generations remembered their violent exploits (cf. 6:11-13).

It may be objected that the NT parallel passages of 2Peter 2:4-11 and Jude 5-7 provide a basis for believing that the angelic view was adopted by the NT authors. But this is not a necessary conclusion to draw (as tempting as it may be for some). There are a couple of other ways to understand these passage that fit better with the original context of Genesis 6, fit consistently with theology of the Bible, and keep the people of God from believing pagan myths.

Possibility one: First, Peter is dealing with the destructive heresies of false teachers. He assures his readers that judgment is coming even though they may not see it right now. He then enters into three distinct examples of how God judged rebellion in the past. The first judgment comes on angels who sinned. No specific sin is named here. But the context is apostasy and teaching error. Then, as another distinct example, Peter uses the judgment of the flood, which we have learned was actually concerned much more with violence than sexual immorality (cf. Gen 6:11-13). Then there is the example of Sodom and Gomorrah who did live sexually lurid lives. Later, Peter describes the people whom God will judge as “those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous and self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries” (2:10-11). This would fit the original fall of the angels well. They rebelled against authority along with Satan and thus they are reserved

for punishment.

The same idea is found in Jude. Three examples are used by Jude concerning rebellion against authority. This rebellion is nothing less than apostasy. This is what Jude is dealing with throughout his short epistle. The children of Israel, the angels, and Sodom and Gomorrah did not want to submit to God's authority, so God judged them. That is the main intention of Jude as is seen in Jude 8 ff. Again three examples of rebellion are used: Cain, Balaam, and Korah. There is no explanation of the specific sin of the angels or hideous offspring coming from unnatural unions. There is only the indication that these are rebellious angels.

**[Optional; possibly summarize]** Possibility two: I think James Jordan also offers a good explanation of the Jude passage, and consequently, the passage in 2Peter.

### **Who Were the Angels of Jude 6?**

“The prophecy of Jude concerns apostasy. An illustration of apostasy and its consequences is found in verse 6, which the New American Standard Bible translates this way: ‘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.’ Verse 7 continues, ‘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.’

‘In the same way as these’ seems to refer to the ‘angels’ of verse 6. ‘These’ is masculine, and thus cannot refer to the ‘cities’ (feminine) of verse 7. Calvin argues in his comments on these verses that ‘these’ refers to the men of the cities, and not to the ‘angels’ of verse 6. Most modern commentators see it as a reference to the ‘angels,’ however.

With this link established, modern commentators generally go to Genesis 6:1-4, and assert that this passage speaks of angels cohabiting with human females. This is the ‘strange flesh’ sin of the angels, and God judged these demons at the Flood. This band of demons is reserved under darkness, while the demons (fallen angels) who did not engage in cohabitation with human females are still at large in the world.

These commentators point to the fact that the phrase ‘sons of God’ is used in Job 1 for angels. Thus, when the sons of God married the daughters of men, the reference is to angelic-human marriages. They support this interpretation by referring to the pseudepigraphical Book of Enoch, from which Jude is supposedly deriving his information.

### **Jude and Jewish Myths**

Let's dispose of the Book of Enoch first of all. The argument that Jude is leaning on Enoch here and elsewhere (vv. 14-15) is wholly gratuitous. Why not say that both Jude and Enoch are citing a common tradition? Jude, under Divine inspiration, tells us of the prophet Enoch in verses 14-15 of his letter. The Book of Enoch gives us the same information, but not under Divine inspiration. There is in fact absolutely no evidence to suggest that Jude was leaning on Enoch for anything, and thus no reason to tie Jude 6 with Enoch's speculations concerning the sons of God and the daughters of men in Genesis 6....”

[Here Jordan explains the so-called dependence upon the Assumption of Moses and the identification of the <sup>3</sup>sons of God<sup>2</sup> in Genesis 6. Jordan continues.]

## Jude 6

“With this in mind, we return to Jude 6. What is the fall of the ‘angels’ spoken of here? Most classical commentators, rejecting the Genesis 6 approach, simply take this verse and its parallel in 2 Peter 2:4 to be a reference to the primordial fall of the wicked angels under the leadership of Lucifer. This creates a problem, however. Clearly not all the demonized angels are ‘cast into hell, committed to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment,’ as Peter writes. This same Peter says that Satan is still somewhat loose, and prowls around like a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8).

The simplest way to resolve this problem is to take the ‘angels’ in this passage as a reference to the Godly line of Seth. This is not at all a strained interpretation, and it does full justice to the context.

J. Marcellus Kik has written that ‘the Greek term *aggelos* does not always refer to such heavenly spirits. The meaning of the term must be determined by the context. In the following passages the Greek word *aggelos* is translated by the word messenger: Matthew 11:10; Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52; Mark 1:2; James 2:25. John the Baptist is called an *aggelos*. The disciples of John the Baptist were also described as angels. And this was true in regard to the disciples of Christ. In James 2:25 the messengers sent to Rahab were called ‘angels.’” [J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1971), p. 147f.]

David Chilton makes the same point, showing that in the Old Testament the word *mal'ak*, often translated ‘angel,’ is used for human prophets in 2 Chronicles 36:15-16; Haggai 1:13; and Malachi 3:1. The ‘angels of the seven churches’ in Revelation are surely human leaders, since it makes no sense to write a letter to a spirit angel. Spirit angels are members of God's heavenly Council, and so are human prophets (and in the New Covenant, all believers). Thus, the term ‘angel’ sometimes refers to a human prophet or messenger, and not always to spirit angels. [See David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1987), pp. 81-83; and Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), pp. 57-96.] This line of approach may well be significant also for our understanding of 1 Corinthians 11:10, as many older commentaries point out.

With this in mind, we can take the ‘angels’ of Jude 6 to be the ‘sons of God.’ This makes a great deal of sense. According to Genesis 4:26, the line of Seth initiated public worship, and therefore public proclamation, into the world. They were messengers--angels--for God. Jude himself calls attention to this angelic-prophetic-messenger task of the pre-deluvian patriarchs in verses 14-15 of his letter, where he quotes the heart of the prophetic message of the ‘angel’ Enoch. Thus, Genesis presents the ‘sons of God’ as messengers (angels), and Jude also presents the Sethites (Enoch) as messengers (angels). These two facts provide strong contextual reinforcement for the interpretation I am suggesting.

Additional reinforcement comes from 2 Peter 2:4-5, which reads ‘For if God did not spare angels [prophets, messengers] when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of

darkness, reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly. . . .’ In one breath Peter speaks of Noah as a preacher and of the ‘angels’ who fell.”

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

In summary, the angelic-human marriage interpretation is to be rejected because it is irrelevant to the context of Genesis 6, and because it seems to contradict our Lord's statement that angels do not marry. The primordial fall of the angels interpretation is also to be rejected because the sinners of Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4 are shut up in hell, and this is not true of the entire company of fallen angels. A resolution of this difficulty that is free of such contradictions is to allow “angels” here to refer to the messengers of the Covenant who were operating before the Flood: the Godly line of Seth. When these “angels” sinned by seeking strange flesh (women outside the covenant; forbidden fruit), they were judged in the Flood, and since that time have been reserved in hell for the day of Final Judgment.

With all of this in mind, I do not believe that the “sons of God” in Genesis 6 were spirit beings from the heavenly host. The “sons of God” were of the line of Seth. These sons were indiscriminate in their choosing from the daughters of men. They did not heed the boundaries set up for them by God. This may not comport with Jewish myth and exciting stories about angelic beings coming to have sex with humans and demon babies being born, but it is biblically consistent.

**Presented** 8-22-04 Covenant PC PM