

# The Sons of God of *Genesis 6* “the Nephilim ”

Gen. 6:2-4: “That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose....There were giants in the earth in those days; and also afterward, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.”

The question of the mention of sons of God in Gen. 6 has always provoked much controversy. Did Angels actually co-habitat with humans, or were they the godly descendant's of Seth that took women from the ungodly line of Cain.

It has been the opinion of the majority of Rabbis that this event had actually occurred, & that they were indeed angels. Ancient rabbinical sources, and the Septuagint translators in the 3rd century before Christ all upheld this view. The early church agreed with this view almost to the end of the fourth century. ( Justin, Cyprian, Athenagoras, Eusebius, also Josephus, Philo, and Judeaus accepted this traditional view. While we should not let tradition be the final say in doctrinal matters we can learn from their statements why they considered this view. What changed this view is only speculated but it very well could have been from an anti supernatural outlook.

Today there are many conservative scholars that hold to the view of actual angels. M. R. DeHaan, C. H. McIntosh, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, F. Delitzsch, A. C. Gaebelein, A. W. Pink, Donald Grey Barnhouse, Henry Morris, Chuck Smith. While we don't interpret the bible because of their view, it is good to read why they have come to these conclusions.

The Hebrew word for sons of God is *Bene elohim*. This term for angels occurs four times in the O.T. in the Septuagint version (the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures ) it's meaning is always used as angels of God, never of man. Most scholars believe this event describes a union between fallen angels who cohabitated with human females. This unnatural occurrence of combining two different species resulted in a offspring of what is called 'giants' in the King James and N K J version and Nephilim in the New American Standard, and the English translation of the Jewish Masoretic text.

Throughout this article we will go through the pros and cons of each view and weigh out the evidence to see which view makes the most sense Scripturally The two principal interpretations are, the term Sons of god are the godly line of Seth (Sethites) the other view is that they are fallen angels. there is no easy solution or quick answers to this question, both views have strong and weak points and good men are divided on the answers. The main scriptural argument for the Sons of God not being angels is the scripture Matthew 22:30 Jesus describes the Holy angels in heaven as not marrying, nor reproducing after their own kind.

This argument proposes that the Sons of God must be human because a sexual union between angels and humans is impossible and leans towards Greek mythology. Since angels are sexless this terminology could easily be referring to godly men (Hosea 1:10 you are sons of the living God ). It is an assumption, when God says “ sons of Elohim” that he is referring to the “sons of Seth.”

The main objection then is that angels do not reproduce sexually, however if we look at the verse more carefully we see Jesus stating that the angels of God in heaven neither marry nor are given in marriage. He gives a specific location, which gives us only two alternatives. Because of where they are located it is a functional impossibility, or that he is referring to only the angels that obey God do not marry. Either way it leaves open the possibility of this occurring on Earth and with the fallen angels that are disobedient to God.

What Mt.22:30 does specifically say is that angels do not marry. Marriage was given to generate new offspring. Angels do not have the ability to procreate among their own species. They may or may not be sexless, although they are in an invisible spirit form they are pictured as male, with male names Michael, Gabriel. They are also called sons of god not daughters ) When they become visible they will usually appear as young men. God made an innumerable amount of angels simultaneously, he does not continue creating them, so they never increase or decrease in number.

We find in the scriptures that angels have the ability to appear as men even though they are spirit creatures. They are able to perform numerous human functions such as eating food as in their encounter with Abraham in Genesis 18. They are able to perform other bodily functions as well, they can walk and talk among us in such a way that we may not be aware of them unless they reveal themselves, Heb. 13:2 “do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.”

The angels that came to warn Lot were mistaken for men and were sought out for homosexual use by the men of Sodom. Angels are also able to carry out God's plans on Earth by supplying food for man 1 kings 19:5-7 Mt. 4:11. They are able to execute God's judgment Rev. 7:1, 14:17, inflict punishment upon man Ez.9:1-8 Acts 12:23. There seems to be some change of substance that takes place on Earth that they can become physical, contrary to their original nature. So if they are able to possess a body of a man and can eat and carry out other functions then why not other abilities.

The term Son of God is never used of man in the Old Testament, only of angels. (Job.1:6,2:1, 38:7)The only exception is Nebuchadnezzar who said of the one who was in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, was like the Son of God.” (Dan 3:25) this was written in Aramaic and he was probably stating this from his Pagan perspective.

The term “sons of God” is used consistently for the angels in their unfallen estate, they are Gods sons because they were directly created by him. When the title sons of God is used such as in the passages of Gen. 6, Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7 it is exclusively used of angels who have access to God's throne. (this is a common Semitic expression ) We find that each time when the sons of God present themselves before God's throne, Satan is with them. This shows that these sons are the fallen angels as God addresses Satan as their representative when they assemble. The vicinity of this meeting is in heaven, for Satan informs God that he has come to his assembly “from going to and fro in the earth.”

Job 38:7 is clearly a reference to the angels united in harmony when they were created in reference to Gen.1:1. It is prior to the rebellion of the angels. Once again this term is used for angels and not man. Their is also the Hebrew term of *bene elim* which is found in Psalm 29:1, 89:6 which means sons of the mighty, referring to man as a class of mighty beings( possibly a more general meaning to include the angels).

In the New Testament believers are also called Sons of God but this is by adoption not referring to nature. ( Rom. 8:14-15; Gal 4:5; Eph. 1:5 ) The Greek word teknon means born ones, meaning children who have a likeness of Jesus' character from a spiritual birth, by being adopted into Hids family therefore ie. they are sons [children of God.]

Jesus is also called the Son of God it is used in a singular sense, not in the plural as sons being one of many, he being the only begotten Son ( unique one of a kind, no other like him). In the scriptures son simply means one possessing the same nature of something. Examples such as son of Abraham or son of man means one possesses the same nature as the subject named. The Greek word for son which is used for Jesus is *huios*. It is limited exclusively for him, signifying he is the son by nature not by adoption. When the word “Sons of God” are used in Gen.6 and in the Old Testament in Hebrew it is Bene Elohim showing they are a special creature related to Elohim (God), not related to man. They are not referred to as the “sons of Cain” or the “daughters of Seth?”

When we go back to the Gen.6 account there are other terms that need to be considered. The title “daughters of men” is a general term referring to females of the human race( Hebrew *benoth Adam* daughters of Adam) they were natural descendants.. Also the term Nephilim (giants) in Gen.6:4 has an interesting history. *Nephil* means fallen one, (im at the end of any Hebrew word changes it to a plural, nephillim-fallen ones.) This does not mean giant, or monstrous in size but someone who possesses super human ability in strength and intelligence, not stature. This word is taken from its root word of *nephal* and *nepheh* which means to fall, abortion or untimely. In 250 BC. the Rabbis that wrote the Septuagint which is a Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures. They changed the word Nephillim to giant, which is the word most translations currently have (giant in Greek *gigantes* implies earth born men of great stature Num.13:33 ). This was a significant change which has obscured the meaning even to today. While some contend they are still around in the time of Numbers the giants were not the same species of the Nephilim. Since the Nephils were not Giant in size but in strength, intelligence and ability. The only creatures that lived through the flood were 8 humans, no others. Some postulate that another group of fallen angels returned again , something which the bible never addresses and would need to if this occurred.

In Unger's Bible dictionary referring to the word for giants (*Nephillim* ) he writes; “the Nephillim are considered by many as demigods, the unnatural offspring of the daughters of men mortal women in cohabitation with” the sons of god” (angels). This utterly unnatural union, violating God's created order of being, was such a shocking abnormality as to necessitate the worldwide judgment of the flood.” (pg. 788)

Gaebelein interprets,” The designation 'Sons of God' is never applied in the Old Testament to believers,” whose sonship is “distinctly a New Testament revelation.” (A.C. Gaebelein, The Annotated Bible (Penteteuch). p. 29).

Can we find any justification for this view elsewhere in the Bible. Or is it as some claim the story of Greek mythology, where we have legends of titans, the gods of Mt. Olympus (Hercules, Achelles) coming down and intermarrying with humans having hybrids, half human and god. What we find is that this is not limited to only the Greek and Roman cultures, almost all ancient civilizations have legends and myths of visitations from the sky. Are these only folklore or are these legends distortions of what really occurred? We have the same for the flood accounts so it is very possible they are distortions of the true account.

There are several questions that are relevant to this event that need to be answered. First what justification is there to confine the daughters of men to be ungodly women specifically from the line of Cain. Does the bible ever classify people in this manner? If the Sons of God are descendants of Seth what are they doing presenting themselves before the Lord in heaven. Job 1:6, 2:1 “ there was a day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.” Also why would there be such unusual offspring from marriage if they were all of human kind.

From the scriptures we can find no justification for separating the race of mankind and making one line righteous the other not. We actually find evidence for the opposite. the scriptures always refer to someone being righteous by their obedience to God, by their spirituality, not by their physical posterity or what family they are in. Why would all the Sethite men be godly and all the women of Cain be ungodly. There is no indication that the line of Seth was godly or stayed godly. If so, why were they also destroyed in the flood along with everyone else. There is no mention of this type of distinction before or afterwards. It would make more sense that intermarriage would occur with also godly women and ungodly men as well. There is no indication to confine the term of “daughters of “ to ungodly women when it's a general classification for womankind. Another factor that seems to lead one away from the two classes of humans is Gen.6:2 stating “they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.” In the Hebrew language this describes a violent taking for themselves, not a good thing. Why would godly men resort to this kind of activity for marriage? In the next verse the Lord says his Spirit will not continue to abide with man and then pronounces the time when the future judgment will occur. All this after their marriage to other humans! When Israel did not obey the Lord from marrying outside their own nation there was never such a punishment. Whether this was a punishment incurred specifically for this event or it contributed to it seems to be somewhat obscured at times.

When the righteous marry the unrighteous they do not give birth to such unusual offspring, unless there is another element to this event. How else can one explain the offspring of this union which are described as “mighty men who were of old, men of renown” in Gen. 6:4. This is a description of their power and fame (their abilities intelligence, and strength far exceeded other men.)

If we look at the affect on humanity from this forbidden act it indicates that man became incredibly evil, where his thoughts were bent on evil all day long and he filled the earth with violence. (Gen. 6:5,13) with this afterwards as the affect from the unnatural offspring of humanity God decides to destroy the Earth. This was such a violation to gods created order that it altered mankind and necessitated a worldwide flood.

Many say how can a demon have sex with a human or have this ability to be physical. As we have already seen angels do change into physical form and can physically help people even though by nature they are invisible spirit beings. The Bible doesn't tell us how this occurred although there are some other factors to consider. A demon can inhabit a person and give them unusual strength and powers beyond any normal human ability. They can even give someone psychic abilities. So it is possible that instead of a creature becoming visible and physical to have sex we have a case of demon possession that affected their offspring's. I'm not saying this is how it occurred but it can be acceptable explanation.

Without the fact of their being two different species angelic and human co- mingling there can be no plausible explanation of God's severe judgment. Which came upon both mankind by the flood and the angels that are now bound in chains. (2 Pt. 2:4-5; Jude 6-7)

What purpose would there be for an angelic assault of this nature? After the fall of Adam and Eve God pronounced judgment on them and the Earth. He also gave a promise that a messiah would come and crush the head of Satan Gen.3:15. What we see consistently throughout the scriptures is a satanic attack to corrupt the line of the messiah. This was his first and probably greatest attempt to pollute the line (gene pool), stopping the seed from appearing. By introducing something foreign to the human race, man would eventually become a hybrid, part human and angel, something God never intended. This would have been disastrous because Christ would then not be able to represent man who was made in the image of God. It would be for this reason god took such a drastic measure to rectify this event.

We should take notice that while this attacked the families of mankind, Noah was undefiled by this activity. Gen. 6:9 “This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, **perfect in his generations**. Noah walked with God.” He was perfect meaning without spot or blemish, healthy his family was not affected by the invasion to defile the “gene pool” of mankind.

With all this information of the antediluvian world in the Old Testament can we find any parallel accounts in the New Testament? Yes we can. We can find even greater detail on these particular angels and how and why they were judged. Without the Gen.6 account referring to angelic beings we are left empty handed on why these particular angels are bound until the end of time.

2 Pt.2:4: “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; 5: And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.”

Jude 6: “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. 7: Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Both of these events are described as pre-flood. Both Peter and Jude place these events between false prophets and Sodom and Gomorrah. Both accounts are in the context of sin and fornication of these cities. (going after a

different kind of flesh than their own type Rom. 1:26,27.) Jude draws a comparison with the sin of Sodom and the angels, Both departed from their own nature to go after unnatural desires. Because of this rebellion they are confined in chains in Tartarus. This is a location in Hell specifically for the angels. These angels were involved in such an extraordinary sin that they needed incarceration until judgment day.

In the Scripture we have recorded two apostasy's of angels. The first occurred in heaven with the rebellion of Lucifer the chief cherubim who had one third of the good angels follow his lead (Ezek. 28:14-16) and were confirmed in their fallen state. The second apostasy is mentioned in 2nd Pt. and Jude in which they abandoned their assigned place of residence to invade another that was off limits to them. The author Jude writes of these angels who sinned and then parallels their sin with sexual immorality.

This incarceration in chains until judgment day gives us further insight of who these angels are. If the sin mentioned in 2nd Pt. were the original fall of the angels which occurred in heaven, then all the evil angels would be in chains, not just some. This would mean that Satan and all the angels would be bound and would not be active today. Obviously this is not correct so the only explanation is a separate event which prompted the Lord to keep them apart from us never to repeat this heinous act again. It seems these particular angelic beings were more inclined to evil than the others that they left their assigned place in the heavens to defile the whole human race. So they could have been a certain class of angels as there are numerous different creatures described in heaven. The Apostle Peter refers to the spirits in prison more than once. In 1 Pt. 3:19-20 he states that after Christ died he went and "preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah." This preaching was not the good news but to proclaim, announce their inevitable judgment, again we find the time of this being pre-flood.

In summary we see from numerous parallel scriptures that this marriage of Gen. 6 was disastrous for humanity. That the offspring of this union led mankind into activities that are promoted by Demons. Their offspring were called the fallen ones, super human in strength and intelligence that became world renowned. That the legends of the Gods in mythology probably are a distortion of a true event just as they have distortions of the flood. That the Lord intervened with a cataclysm in which only eight people were saved. There is no line of Sethites to be found afterward. That this behavior is consistent of the fallen angels trying to pollute the line of the messiah. That the word Sons of God is used exclusively for angels in the Old Testament. The weight of the evidence with the information we have does seem to conclude that the Sons of God are indeed the fallen angels.