

Bible Studies

Nephilim



Read Genesis 6v1-4

This is surely one of the most puzzling passages in the Old Testament. It is our task to try to make sense of it.

The context

When we seek to understand the Bible, understanding context is very important. Why is this written here? We may not know who the “sons of God” are or who the Nephilim are, but we can understand the point the writer of Genesis is making.

Read the first section of Genesis 6. What is the writer describing?

The answer is simple. He is about to record the events of the flood and is setting the scene for God’s Judgement by explaining why it was necessary. He speaks of God’s sorrow over mankind and how mankind was (and is) evil. These verses are essentially explaining; *that a new stage has been reached in the progress of evil, with God’s bounds overstepped in yet another realm.* Kinder. What ever explanation we find has to take this into account.



Who are the Nephilim?

Whoever the Nephilim were it is clear that they were whiped out by the flood. Some Bibles translate this as Giants, (LXX) but that can be misleading. They are described as heroes and men of renown or reputation (lit ‘men of name’). This same word is used in Numbers 13v33

Read Numbers 13v33

The word *Anak* is the Hebrew for Giant. It seems to mean large in stature and or, ability. It is not possible that the “Giants” of Canaan were literal descendants of the Nephilim of Genesis 6. The Giants the Bible describes (like Goliath) are a only a little taller that the Guinness book of records tallest man.

Who were the sons of God?

The Scripture uses the term Sons of God to describe two different groups. Each use of the phrase gives a different possible explanations of this passage.



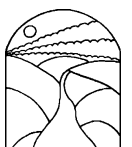
Who are the sons of God? Galatians 3:26

Adam has three sons who are named to us, Cain, Abel and Seth. Abel served God and was murdered. Cain was Godless. It is through the line of Seth that the men of God arise; Enoch and Noah. From Cain’s line we find Lamech, who describes himself as a murder seven times worse than Cain. Gen 4v24. With regard to their faith in God, of the scares information that is given us of Cain and Seth’s descendants, Cain’s were evil and Seth’s were Godly. (Watch out for duplicate names both Cain and Seth had descendants called Enoch and Lamech).

If we take Seth’s line to be those who were of faith, who were ‘sons of God’ in the same way that we are sons of God, then all this passage is saying is that Seth’s line intermingled with Cain’s. I.e. the Godly did not keep themselves pure. This is what Paul later warns us against.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? 2 Corinthians 6:14-16

In the end it turned out that, of those who followed God, only Noah is left! The Sons of Seth have fallen by the way.



It is interesting to note that the account of the Flood is preceded by an account of lawless marriage. Matthew 24v37-39. In addition this all occurred out of a population explosion. During the year 2000 the 6,000,000,000 inhabitant, of this planet will be born, this figure is twice what it was in 1960.

Can you think of any flaws in this first theory?

Note: God's response to this is my Spirit will not contend with man, not with angels.



Who are the Sons of God? Job 1v6, 2v1, 38v7

The second group described as sons of God are angels. Among the Angels two further divisions are possible Holy Angles, Mat 25:31 and fallen Angles, Jude 1:6. We assume the angles referred to here are fallen angles.

These fallen angles seem to have followed Satan in His rebellion against God. Some people believe that they number a third of the angelic host. These Fallen angels we tend to refer to as demons.

Under this explanation it appears that some of these fallen angles took physical form and produced physical children with ordinary women. It was this mixing of the demonic and human, that forced God to act.

Some have seen this as an attempt at demonic government.

What does Matthew 12:43-44 suggest about demons?

To be a spirit without a body, is what Paul describes as being 'unclothed'. 2 Cor 5:4. In light of the demonic desire for a physical body, it is possible to see Gen 6 as referring to some form of Demon possession.

There are some problems:



Why would Genesis call fallen angels sons of God?

(It must be recognised that Satan is juxtaposed with them in Job.)



A second problem is found in Matthew 22:30. What is it?

This then would require a change in the nature of fallen angels subsequent to Gen 6. Some believe they have found this in the following verses.

2 Peter 2:4

Jude 6

The bondage they experience is the inability to have physical bodies. God prevented such an unnatural event from ever happening again. The strength of this argument is found in Jude v7 where Sodom's sins are described as being similar to the demons. This in turn seems to explain why there is such a thing as demonic possession but not angelic possession.

Can you think of any problems with this explanation?

It seems to me that the sin these angels committed was the initial rebellion against God not fornication with man. It also seems to me that for this theory to work we have to go beyond what is clearly taught in Scripture.

However just because we cannot conclusively explain this does not mean we have to reject the view that the sons of God were fallen angels.



We are left with two explanations both of which are possible. It is clearly hard to chose between the two.

Do we need to?